

The Beat Within



The Beat Within // Weekly Publication of Writing and Art from the Inside // Volume 12.04

EDITOR'S NOTE VOLUME 12.04

Hey Beat readers! Here we go another week of thoughts, rants, poetry and love, and when we say love we are not just talking about the love you have for The Beat, but those crazy and not so crazy thoughtful love poems many of you share with us each week, you know, when you spill your heart out to your girl, your boy, your family etc. Don't get us wrong, we appreciate the love, we'd take the love over the hate any day. That's not to say none of you don't spill the hate our way, that too is accepted in our pages as long as it is not directed at a specific person, but the hate is also what is causing too many of you to be confined. Hate is ugly. Hate brings pain. Hate is a problem that needs to be address. Curious, do you really need to hate? Do you know why you hate? Do you really have to hold such a grudge? Can you forgive? It takes a strong person and a confident person to forgive, but it can be done and many of us over time have learned to forgive.

All right, in last week's "big" Beat we feature pieces from our latest editorial note writing contest that was announced back in the fall and winter of 2006. The subject was "Letters To The President." This week we would like to repost this thoughtful commentary from a solid thoughtful writer who has given us Beat readers plenty to read over the years on a variety of topics, you name it! He is not only a stellar writer, but an old friend that we have had the privilege of knowing for many years, with that said we bring you William Grajeda, who delivers a wonderful heartfelt letter to President Bush from his cell in San Quentin State Prison. Read on...

Dear Mr. President Of The United States Of America, George W. Bush:

Mr. President George W. Bush of the United States of America, this is a notice of concern, petition and complaint regarding the inner-city populations of America that are afflicted by poverty, hunger and despair. Mr. President, you have already shown your feelings in regards to the impoverished and down-trodden classes of America, as you demonstrated in your distance from the catastrophes of Hurricane Katrina and its aftermath which largely affected an impoverished section of Louisiana.

However, Mr. President, I am here to inform you that this epidemic of inner-city deterioration of poor and broken home families is a growing epidemic in our American society that cannot be kept shut inside the darkness of a your White House closet for long, Mr. President. Soon it will begin to reach across those lines of urban and suburban classes and climb even higher, just like the early unknown cancer plagues of our early American society.

Mr. President, already the state of California has more broken home families, children living in poverty and parents incarcerated then the population of most third world countries. Mr. President, we have generations of American youth dying in the streets across America from New York to California every second of the hour.

Already the state of California has over 200,000 thousand people incarcerated in penal systems, that's more people in prison then France, Germany and Nigeria had combined altogether! And can you imagine how many of our American children are directly affected by this fact and then multiply that statistic across American urban cities, where our impoverished youth are being innocently infected by this horrible epidemic we are ignoring! Mr. President, our inner-city American children are being raped, murdered and tortured by the impoverished conditions and our blatant disregard of our American civil responsibilities to our citizens as a whole society, a society I should remind you, that is considered (by a majority) a Christian community.

Mr. President, and yet our answer to the impoverished conditions of our inner-city America — where may I remind you, that our youth are being abused, starved, and devastated by the shocks of sudden broken homes as their mothers, fathers, aunts, uncles, siblings and generations are being murdered, raped or robbed before their innocent eyes or are carted away to the cages of some newly built prison house — is only to build more juvenile detention centers, youth correctional facilities and then later more prison warehouses, as the next generation from our inner city America increases in population and helps usher in the next quarter century. Mr. President, surely we must not stand by idle!

Mr. President, there is a young girl of twelve years old, walking down Sunset Blvd in Los Angeles, this very moment selling her body for a place to sleep.... There is a nine-year-old boy on International Blvd. in East Oakland California selling baggies of pills or crack so he can eat tonight and share with his hungry brothers and sisters...

Mr. President, there is a mother pregnant inside Chowchilla Valley State Prison doing three years for stealing pampers from K-mart for her two-year-old son, what happens to her new born? What happens to her? There is a father in Folsom State Prison serving a life term 'cause he needed another shot of heroin.... There is a ten-

year-old son in juvenile hall, there is a sixteen year old daughter in CYA (California Youth Authority) there is a grandma and grandpa on their knees praying for help.... There is more... all of them lost voices crying from the attic/darkness of their American home.

Mr. President, our inner-city Americans are dying, and nobody is listening with their hearts! Mr. President, our children in the inner-cities of our urban society are being slaughtered by our deliberate turn of the head and being swept into the American closet of silence.

Mr. President, our inner-city children of America are dying to be heard and there last refuge for many of them to be heard are clinging onto the ledges of The Beat Within pages that reveal the epidemic which continues to murder our inner-city children. Mr. President, The Beat Within is a non-profit organization for the inner-city youth and juvenile that reach from as far as LA, San Francisco, across Texas, Louisiana to New York, giving a voice exclusively to the impoverished and broken home juvenile and inner-city youth that are the constant victims of murder, rape, child abuse, and poverties of many kinds.

Mr. President, our home-base is San Francisco, California, where it began and continues to grow as we struggle to help our inner-city American youth to express the despair of our abandonment in their desperate time of need, Mr. President. Although we constantly struggle to keep this non-profit organization above the financial waters Mr. President, over goal and commitment remains steadfast and unwavering. And that goal is to help bring hope back into our inner-city American/ communities, to help restore that hope which our American children in the inner-city are being robbed of daily by the constant despairs of poverty, broken homes and families scattered apart and sent off to prison institutions or graveyards, only to leave their children left to the cold unforgiving streets of the inner-city America.

Mr. President, this Beat Within publication is just a brief glimpse of the voices you will find in the dregs of our inner-city American communities — voices and pleas that will become the last words for many of them, voices that have a place in our Beat Within publication before they disappear forever into the darkness of that White House closet...

Please do not be silent Mr. President. Hear our voice, help your inner-city America Mr. President. Hear our voice, Mr. President. Do not abandon us.

OK, what can we say? Every single one of you is capable of writing such a letter. Every one of you is capable of seeing beyond your own pains, beyond the block, the hood, the gang and crew! When you are ready, give it shot and empower not only you but all who read!

As for the topics at hand, the first topic addressed prior to the writing you are about to read is "One Thing About Me That They Don't Know" -We often read that you object to being judged by people who don't really know you. So, we want you to take a close look at yourself from the inside out, and tell us what in particular about you — something they don't know about you — makes you who you really are. This doesn't have to be only the system. Even your family and friends may not know that special thing that's unique to you alone. If they wrote a book about your life story, what is it that you feel the world should know about you that the world doesn't already know?

The second topic, "That Person" - Think about all the people who are close to you; from your mom, dad, boy/girl friend, brother/sister, auntie/uncle, grandparents, a homie, a teacher, a counselor? Who? We want to know this week, who is that one person you find hardest to please? Why is it so hard to please this person? Tell us about that person and your struggles to find a common ground.

Lastly, "A Dog Story..." - They say that dogs are our best friends, and — like all friends — we have both good times and bad times with them. What's your favorite dog story? Did you have a dog to take care of when you were little? What's your favorite memory of that dog? Or, maybe you have that perfect pet at home right now. What makes him (her) so perfect? We also know some dog stories that don't have happy endings — like when a dog bites you, or when they have to be put down at the end of their lives. Most everybody has a favorite dog story. Tell us your favorite dog story, and give us as many details as you can remember.

Knowing the topics, lets now give praise to our POW (Piece Of the Week) recipients, they are Jonathan, Lazy, Jen, Big Vic, Teezy F, Rahimi, Lil' Khan, and McD from the 150 Crew; Alex Meen, Mikoo, and Snow Bunny, from SF/YGC; Lil' One, Megan, and Lala from Arizona; Pinky and Santos from Walden House; last but not least Jesse from Santa Cruz.

All right this issue goes out to those people, young and old, who are out of touch, may they one day soon get it! Keep an open mind!

The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our communities already—we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

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Art: Much props to everyone for the great art this week.

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www.thebeatwithin.org

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What They Don't Know!

What's up wit' it Beat, it's your homie Conflict comin' to you from ALACO (Alameda County) Juvenile Hall in San Leandro. Well I've been in here for about four months now. I've been really angry and depressed I've missed my baby's first Thanksgiving, Halloween, Christmas and New Year.

It's messed up! It's my fault though. I love little Selena to death and I hate myself for what I've done and what I've missed. I messed up big time. I'm supposed to go to a group home but they can't find one. My PO told me to get comfortable.

I have a feeling I'll be going to max and walking the green mile to CYA. It's just going to get worse. I'm trying to stop gangbangin' but if I am going to CYA, I'm going to have to. I love my baby and her mother and if CYA is what it takes to get her, I'll do it even if it's going to take a little bit of hard times.

I think if I stay here five months, they'll let me go home on EM or home supervision, because that's nine months. That's how much time I'm supposed to be in a group home for. I just have to have faith.

You know, I go to sleep at night and all I see is bloodshed. In my dreams people die. But for what? A color? Or is it pride? I've seen so many things in my life, it's hard to believe we're doing this to each other. When is it going to stop? When we're all dead? When?

I think about when it will be my turn. I've seen myself die in many dreams I've had. Will they come true? Will they come true? Will my daughter grow up without her real daddy? Only time will tell.

It's funny though, you ask yourself why but you can't find the answer. Instead we wait 'till one of us gets shot to really understand what's going on. All we know is revenge. We can't get along physically and mentally and emotionally. But I guess it's all we know. We need to forget and learn something knew.

-Jonathan, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Wow! You just said a whole mouthful. You're in a difficult place and trying to keep sane. You're hoping for the best but preparing for the worst. The most important thing is that you love your daughter and you want to do right by her. If that is your goal, you'll do it, you'll get through it. Your daughter will still call you daddy and you will still be just as important to her, even if you have to go through some difficult times and separation. Keep your eye on the prize and you'll get through it. We also wish you success and fining a better path than a path that leads to gang violence. You have a choice in the matter no matter what you think or see. Trust us on that one.

What They Don't Know

I'm in Walden House PSK right now, and that's one thing a lot of people don't know about me. But it's seething I want them to know because it shows that I went through a drug program and made it through.

A lot of people have been through a drug program, but it makes us together as unique and strong. I would like it to be known because people always saw me fall flat on my ass, and not be able to get up. Now, I've been through an addiction and survived.

In the process of surviving my addiction, I fell a few times, but was able to pick myself back up. So people can now know that I'm a survivor of a lot — recovery, addiction, rape, abuse, and so much more. I think that's something the world should know about me that they never did.

-Pinky, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: We admire you for dealing with your addiction, and for being honest about having to pick yourself up when you fall. To us, that's the very definition of success. No one moves forward without facing setbacks in life. Those who succeed do what you have done, pick themselves up and keep moving. You're doing great, and you have much to teach. Keep teaching!

You Are How You Were Raised

I think that the minute a person is born, he automatically sees a way of living, and nothing can change it. The way your parents raise you is what creates you. Certain situations in your life that are taking place are the things that create your life style. Some people were raised a certain way and grew up a certain way.

For example: if a kid will never feel comfortable to ask you for help, then he feels you are the type of person that won't help him. So he's growing up on his own most of the time. So his feelings are getting worse and worse. He's getting more and more problems as he's growing up. But he can't ask for help because he doesn't know how to.

So, basically what I'm trying to say, the first thing you adapt to is the only thing your know. If a person grows up with a loud family, he'll be loud. If parents act a certain way, he will act like the parents.

Government people these days are living the life of a king 'cause the only thing they see is acting right and being polite. But you can't be born polite. The government only see one way of living and they control you. That's not fair!

-Alex U3, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We rally admire how well you've thought this piece out, and how you've explained it. Well done! At the same time, we don't agree with everything you've written. For example, even though we learn from how we're raised, that doesn't mean we can't add to our learning as we grow and incorporate what we learn into our behavior. That's one reason why we always emphasize going to school, and especially going to college (which should be a MUST in your case), because it gives you alternative views and choices that you never knew existed until you exposed yourself to them. This is true for all of us — there is always more to learn than time to learn it, and it's up to each of us to decide whether what we learn is worth changing our outlook and behavior over. We know many, many people who have moved beyond their early upbringing to become teachers, counselors, writers, leaders, etc. The only other thing we want to say is that even though we agree that it isn't fair to be held to a certain standard when only one class of people is taught that standard, it just doesn't change your situation to complain about that. It's not going to change. There's only one possibility for changing the picture you see, and that is to change the principal actor in the picture — and that's you!

The way your parents raise you is what creates you.

Why

Why?

Why cry when you're gonna die?
There's never no one there by your side
To help you through your troubles
Why try when no one cares?
All they do is tell you lies
The reason why I do not cry
Is because no one is willing to be there 'till the day you die
This is why I say, "Why cry?"

Why? (part II)

The reason why I don't cry
Is because everyone says they don't need me
I'm nothing
All people want is to put me down and kick me while I'm on the ground
These are the reasons why I don't cry

Love and respect

-Lil' One, SEF Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: Wow. Your writing expresses a lot of hurt, anger and resentment. We wonder what has brought this hopelessness into your life? It sounds like you feel there is no one there for you. That is a hard thing to believe. No one is alone in life unless they choose to be. Look around and we bet you will find a lot of people that care deeply about you. People come and go in our lives, even parents and family. It is not easy but we have to keep reaching out to others when we are in need. We guarantee there are people around you that will support and care for you. You gotta go and find them. One last thing...You are NEVER "nothing". You, and each person in this world, are unique, wonderful people with their own special skills and talents. Don't ever give up. There are always loving, supportive people out there for each of us.

That Person

The person that I find hardest to please is a question I never thought about. But it would have to be my dad. Growin' up there was time when my dad would try to be there and play his role. But stuff wouldn't work out like that. Like most families, my parents didn't live in the same household, ever since I was born. I also I have so many brothers and sisters, but I'm the only one with my mom and my dad. Well back to the point. Me and my dad don't really talk. Never did. Our relationship consist of a call and trip to McDonald's or something for a birthday or holiday. During the time I did spend at my dad's house, I would always notice how he treated my sisters differently. Like he was their daddy and I was the kid he picked up once every two weeks.

I never thought about any of this until I had my own child just a lil' over a month ago. Getting locked up a week after his birth made me do a lot of thinking. It had me looking into my past. And it made me realize how much I was starting to become like my dad with the drugs, the alcohol, having unprotected sex with different girls while my baby mama is at home taking care of my son.

I tell myself I wanna change, step up to the plate and take care of my responsibilities. But I don't know if I can do that because I never had an example to look up to. I tell myself as much as I tell my girl that I'm gonna be faithful, when deep down inside I know I can't. I tell everybody I'm gonna be there for my son, when deep down inside I know I don't know how to.

Well with all this stuff that's going on in my life I know I can't please my dad. I thought I could by proving to him I can be a better dad then he was, but from the way things going, looks like I'm worse than he ever was. I hope when I get out that I am strong enough to be the man that everybody thinks I could be. Hopefully I can make some changes and step my game up for me and my loved ones.

-Lazy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Listen up Lazy! If you can say everything you just said, then there is no way you can get away with an excuse like you can't do the right thing because your daddy never gave you a good example. If you can say it, if you can understand it, if you can think it - then you can do it. So, as our man Spike says, "Do The Right Thing!"

My Eyes To The Skies

One thing about me that people don't know is that I like, just like to lay on something high or on a roof and just lay there and look at the sky and at the clouds flying by. Or if it's at night then I like to look at the stars and just count.

I know it might sound pretty weird, but I like to do it. It keeps me/my mind out of all the pressure that is goin' through my head. I know I don't need to say it, but I just want to say it, 'cause it made me feel like everything is all right.

-Mikoo U3, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We don't find anything weird about this at all. In fact, Mikoo, but we love this piece. We can imagine you lying on the roof deciding what pictures the clouds make, or counting the infinite stars at night. Does this ever make you feel that we here on Earth are very tiny, and that our problems seem much smaller when compared to the vast universe? We find that your ability to make yourself feel better by casting your eyes upwards is a great gift, and a symbol that you are looking in the right direction. Thank you for writing this very unique piece.

God, The Universe, And All That

I haven't been writing as much as I usually do. I'm just taking hella time to educate myself and do things that'll benefit me. You know, reading books, studying definitions, thinking about morals, god the universe, what my place in the world is and all that. I'm coming up with a lot of answers, too. So that's where I'm at right now.

I'm not worried about ever coming back here or not, but I'm just trying to be the best person I can be and do what I need to do — get this revolution alive and running! The people who want to stay back, they can stay back for now. whether it's because they're scared of the system and government and too scared to rise above the state of acquiescence, or because they're locked in a mentality and don't want to leave the comfort zone. But don't worry, I won't leave any potential troops behind! It's just right now I don't have time to keep writing hella shhh for The Beat like I usually do. I'll keep writing but just not 5-6 pages letters every week!

So for all those people who really are trying to do right, don't get it wrong — not every law out there that exists means it's the right thing to do, and just because the government tells you something doesn't mean its fair. Doing the right thing and following the law can contradict each other. There's many problem out there that need to be changed. so we gotta do something about it.

-Meen U6, SF/YGC

From The Beat: And yet another example of a mind opening, expanding, growing — and teaching! Wow! From this side of things, it's good to know that there are still intellectual minds set on breaking down factors of life and politics truthfully in order to make real change. For those of us who came up during the 1960s, this kind of intellectual, even revolutionary, ferment was the order of the day. It's been missing for far too long. Don't underestimate the power (and desire) of the government to silence people like you. As we often point out, "they" can deal with the usual ways young people express their anger; they can always bring superior force to whatever goes down on the street. What they fear is not the threats of violence but the threats of thought. Nothing frightens power more than an honest and educated resistance grounded in moral principles... which means, you may well find yourself confronted by that very power you oppose as "they" begin to perceive where your mind is taking you... and your potential to get others to open their minds, too. Keep going, keep growing... and keep bestowing.

A Dog's Story

When I was little — I must have been younger than six, 'cause I only had one sibling at the time, my little brother — my mom brought home two professional fighting dogs, the meanest dogs I had ever seen. Their names were Mickey and Franky Rose. They had belonged to a late judge who died of a heart attack at work. He was the only person the dogs listened to, so they stayed in the garage of his house while he was at work, until he came home and fed them and let them run in the yard.

One day he never came home, and they wouldn't allow anyone in the garage but him. When this happened, the late judge's wife cut a hole in her garage so she could feed and water them without getting eaten herself. Pretty soon her garage was filled with feces and two ranting dogs that scared her to death. She decided to tell her friend she couldn't deal with them anymore, and she was gonna have them put down. The only problem was she couldn't get them out of the garage without getting eaten, so she needed to find someone who could.

That's when her friend found my mom. (At the time, she rescued endangered dogs, mainly vicious endangered dogs). My mom went in with a Snicker's bar and walked out with two loving, excited dogs. When the late judge's wife saw that, she told my mother she could keep them or put them down, whatever she wanted. She decided to keep them, so the judge's wife gave my mom all the harnesses and equipment. That's how we got the two dogs that saved my sanity and life multiple times.

-Snow Bunny U4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We love this dog story, SB, except for one thing: you left us hanging with the ending of your story. How did these dogs save your sanity? How did they save your life multiple times? Do you still have these dogs now? If not, did you have to put them down, or what? What was the worst part of being a dog owner? What was the best part? Are you going to have dogs of your own one day? What kind do you like?

Christmas '06

christmas filled with chlorophyll
 smells like the forests to me
 decorated with lights
 the feeling's hard to fight
 ornaments hanging
 from left to right
 candy canes dangling
 your cavities are filled with fright
 your savoring the bottom
 like cheese to mice
 anticipations are hard to fight
 with the star or angel
 at the top lookin' so bright
 our hearts filled with holiday joy
 but there's none of this in sight
 just your bed
 the picture in your head
 sink and toilet in the corner
 the officers yell "lights out"
 time to go to bed
 now you're wishin' in your head
 "i wish i was home instead"

-Jen, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You've written a classic Christmas poem for all the youth incarcerated over the holidays, and it's as bright as childhood dreams at the same time the dismal reality you describe makes the reader want to scream. Maybe if there were billboards across the nation with your poem, people would realize rehabilitation is a must — so young so-called criminals can be home for the holidays. Right now the public doesn't want to pay for expensive programs that actually might get the job done, but how expensive to society is it to have detainees actively unsocialized every holiday season feeling hurt, angry and alone. Thanks for your poem! If society won't help, figure out on your own what you need to change in your life to be home next Christmas, 'cause you don't deserve this.

Desperate Contrasts

A house, a car, nice things, friends, family, support vs. the streets, no shoes, nothing of my own, crackheads, needles, regrets, sheer misery.

Energy, health, dance, gymnastics competition to performance, performance to competition vs. emaciation and malnutrition, holding me back from that next sack... Under all the bruises there are arms, long sleeves... Can't remember which needle was mine. Don't wanna catch nothin', 50/50 chance... Oh well...

Pride, integrity, beauty and self-confidence vs. guilt, shame, embarrassment, disgust, self-repulsion and hate.

Dirt bikes, BBQs, movies, snowboarding, balance vs. tears and rage day in and day out, suffocating inside that hollow block of cement.

All smiles and good times traveling the world vs. lost memories, painful nostalgia, dry eyes but bleeding heart.

Who do you know that so desperately craves these things, these contrasts?

-Santos, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: The powerful way you have laid these things out, side by side, only reinforces how controlling drugs can be in your life, overwhelming intelligence and good sense. If people could hold onto their senses when they took these powerful chemicals, they would never allow them to take over their minds and bodies, because it's so obvious (as you have demonstrated) what you give up when you go under their chemical control. But, of course, dependency has both a physical and a psychological control, and can make people do things that no one would choose in their right minds. It sounds to us that you are in your right mind now, so keep that clarity and sobriety going. You have the makings of a great teacher. Maybe your own bitter experience can prevent some other young person from having to go through what you've been through. Thank you for this clear and powerful piece of writing.

Never Give Up On Yourself

I've been through more than I can handle.
 I've done more than I can control.
 I've seen more than I was supposed to.
 I went down the wrong path.
 I followed the wrong dream

My name is Lachaven. I was born and raised in Phoenix, AZ.

My mother walked out on me when I was young.

My dad is in and out of jail.

I have a daughter who passed away.

I've been raped by those close to me.

I've got hurt by people I trust.

I've did bad things that I can't hide from or forget.

Whenever I needed someone, no one was there.

I was all alone.

I tried and I tried but my best wasn't good enough.

I survived the worst.

I've been through enough.

I went through the dark until I found the light.

I SURVIVED!

Never give up.

Don't let the worst get the best of you.

Trust your heart.

Whatever you want, you can do

- Lala, SEF Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: It sounds like you have been through a lot in your life but you continued to keep your hope alive and SURVIVE!! I think your message to The Beat Within is amazing! You are a living example of pushing through the hard times, surviving and moving on. No matter what happens to us in life, we must press on. As your writing says, there is ALWAYS a light at the end of the tunnel.

I Wish

Dad,

I wish you were here to protect me from what I've been caught up in.

I wish you were here so you could have made mom keep me for all of those years. I wish you were here when I met him.

I wish you could have told me how older guys only want one thing.

I wish you could have told me how they'll manipulate and brainwash you.

I wish you could have taught me that there is more to the world than hustlers, thieves and prostitutes.

I wish we were a family

so I didn't have to resort to being jumped in and jumped out.

It took me a lot to realize that the people I thought were my family weren't.

It took me a lot to realize that I ain't gonna get nowhere on the streets

bangin' and smokin' dope.

It took me a lot to realize that my mom loves me.

It took me a lot to realize that I love myself.

It took me a lot to realize that I have done this all on my own.

No one helped me through anything, but I still got through it and I stay strong.

It's still takin' a lot to realize that I'm in SEF (juvenile) for a reason.

I couldn't continue what I was doing and still be alive.

Every night I think of you and I want to do better for mom, you and myself

RIP - David Shane Burnett

Love Always, your Baby Girl

-Megan, SEF Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: This is a great memorial to your dad. Fathers are an important part of our lives. Unfortunately things happen in life and sometimes our fathers are no longer with us. Death, divorce, separation or abandonment. Things happen and sometimes we find ourselves without our dads. Living our life without our fathers can be one tough thing to do. We think that it is important to remember that we can still be happy, strong and successful without our fathers. If you have a father in your life, rejoice. If you don't, remind yourself that you are still a great and worthy person with other special people to love.

About The Beat Within

beat within helps me express my heart
 didn't like doin' this at the start
 but things changed since i came here
 showed me how to write about my fears
 to write about all my life, present and past
 showed me i had been movin' too fast
 helped me become who i am today
 always had time to listen to what i had to say
 so i thank them for takin' the time
 to listen to my soul and my mind
 this program is a one of a kind
 let me express myself in rhymes
 some nights i'm up writin' till eleven
 tuesday nights i can't wait till seven
 just so i can put my words on paper
 sometimes i got to use a stapler
 but i don't mind doin' it for the beat
 'cause they keep me grounded on my feet

-Big Vic, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Thanks for the words so sweet. Even on a purely positive tip, your rhymes come with heat. And we appreciate your contributions to our 'zine each and every week. Many times we put your words on the cover of The Beat. You've become a voice of truth, whether you're portraying your stress, or how you got into this mess, or proving you have the strength to put your best foot forward as you keep moving toward redemption, first in your own mind, heart and soul, and then, you pray everyday, for the chance to redeem your life on the outs with your family in everyday reality, with your feet on the ground, each footstep a triumphant sound of surrender to the better part of yourself. You already talk the talk, and hope to soon be able to walk the walk that leads away from trouble and toward productivity, health and legitimate wealth. Much love and respect. And thanks again.

In My Dream

Late night wakin' up kickin' screamin' in my bed
 feeling the tears in my eyes from my dream that I
 shed
 Picturing freedom family times
 Hopin' you feel my pain through my rhymes
 God for give me I know it's wrong but I plan to die
 Used to dream of happiness and heaven in the sky
 Now everything is crumbled, every day it's a struggle
 Ninjas muggin' actin' like they thuggin'
 But to me they're just buggin'
 I'm in a point that I can't turn
 I feel a pain in my heart of burn
 Somebody help me tell me where to go from here.
 'Cause I feel the shadow of death comin' near.
 I live in the world of darkness
 'Cause everyone is heartless
 So much pain on me to keep
 That it got me afraid to sleep
 Cause I'm havin' crazy dreams
 Although it might not seem
 But how could I show you how I felt inside
 I'm all on my own, I have to keep it down and hide
 Nobody has heart and that's a damn shame
 But one day you will feel the same
 And where the time comes.
 Where my heart beats no more.
 I'll be glad
 'Cause the world got me sore.

-Rahimi, 150 Crew

From The Beat: "Out of great sorrow, great beauty." That's what this incredible poem made us think. Your voice comes up howling out of the abyss, and you say you feel alone, but no artist is truly alone, because every soul who reads this - in The Beat and anywhere else, will feel with you and recognize what you say. Not only that but so many people feel exactly as you do, that reading your words will echo their own hearts. Your heart is necessary, may it beat for many more years.

'06 Was the Past

Man I ran from my group home with five months left last,
 but '06 is the past
 I lost hella patnas in the hood last year but '06 is the past
 I made a lot of money last year, but '06 is the past
 I did a lot of bad things to people, family last year but '06 is
 the past.
 I did over a 100 last year but '06 is the past
 Man we had 154 murders last year but '06 is the past
 I did over a 100 last year but '06 is the past
 Man they gassed wheezy but '06 is the past
 Man I ducked so many bullets last year, but '06 is the past
 I only went to church like 5 times, but '06 is in the past
 I was in jail for Christmas last year, but '06 is the past
 And since I miss out on so much stuff last year and did so
 much wrong last year,
 In this year I was just happy that I last.

-Teezy F, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Wow. Amazing writing. The old sonnets by the masters - Shakespeare and Petrarch and the famous poets from 500 years ago, all did the same sort of thing you do here. Ending on a new rhyme (in this case, the word "last."). So you are walking in the paths of greatness...maybe you will write another poem like this next year, telling us that '07 was in the past... what will you have to say about these next ten months. Will you be telling the same story, or a different one?

My Life

I'm gonna tell ya 'bout my life and how I was raised.
 There's only one God, and one that I praise!
 Yeah Yeah!

All my life I didn't have a thing.
 The watches, chains and all that bling,
 Growing up was hard in a life of pain
 Nothing real all just a game
 I can't even explain what I was going through
 See my life was strange it was all a puzzle
 Sleep in the cold and it was a struggle
 I learned how to play the game the hard way
 I learned how to stay at the top and not fall to the bottom
 Like Lil' Wayne say I got 'em
 Every day I tried to make my own money
 Got kicked out and had nowhere to live
 Mom and dad had nothin' to give
 Had to survive the life of misery
 There was no road out there for me
 The world so boring and cold
 It sucks not having anyone to hold
 Pain is a hard thing and it happens a lot
 Sometimes in life we all gotta suffer
 Someday in life it'll make you tougher

-Lil' Khan, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Wow, when we asked you to step up and write more from the heart, we had no idea you were going to step to the top of a mountain to shout your truth. This poem is powerful and moving in so many ways that we don't know where to start, first by shedding light on your past, and by writing about pain and the wisdom that comes with it... it seems fitting that you begin by talking about God, because the whole poem feels like a prayer - a prayer that regardless of what you've been through, you may come out of it a free man. Keep 'em coming!

Talkin' Through a Newspaper

The Beat Within is a place to relax, sit around talk, have fun,
 meet new people about your problems or you can hear about
 other people problems.

The Beat Within is like talkin' to someone through a
 newspaper or more like a chatroom: You hear about all kinds of
 things like people fightin' for their lives, people having babies,
 people going to the Y or to the pen, or people getting released.
 There is all kind of excitement in The Beat Within, so if you run
 across a stroke of bad luck, and end up in jail, just pick up a
 Beat Within on your way to your room, and sit back and chill.

-McD, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You left out one thing: The Beat Within is you.

From The Beat: The following story, "Tried As An Adult," has been featured in installments over numerous weeks, this week we have finally finished typing the last installment of this epic work that speaks of the journey of a young man being tried as an adult. Thank you readers for your patience, and thank you Jesse for sharing your very important story with us.

Tried As An Adult

The lights go on. It's six o'clock. I wake up mad as hell that I have to spend another day here. I stand up, stretch, and remember that I have court. Then I think of what kind of stuff the DA will throw at us today.

The staff comes to my door, unlocks it, and gives me a broom. I sweep out my room and give back the broom. They say, 'get ready for showers', so I do. They close my door and lock it.

Ten minutes pass and staff tells, "stand by." They unlock our doors and we go to take our showers.

Then shortly after, we come back to our rooms. It is now six thirty. I brush my teeth and get my stuff straight. Then I go back to sleep. Staff knocks on my door. My eyes open and they say, "time for court." It is now seven. I get up and straighten up my stuff and step out of my room, put on my shoes, then walk down the hall, straight to the unit's front door.

Staff calls on the radio that they are sending me up. I-S copies. I begin walking to I-S.

When I step out of the unit, I feel the cool morning breeze and can see that it's foggy. But I can't look too long, because I-S is just a short way from my Unit.

I walk into I-S. They take me to a holding cell. It's pretty big. It has a big window next to the door and a concrete slab that goes across the room. There's a mattress on it, so I lay down.

Fifteen minutes go by. I hear the back entrance door click open. I get up and see that the sheriff has arrived. He comes to my door and unlocks it. I stand up and put both knees on the cot. He puts the shackles on me. They have a three-foot chain connected to handcuffs, which he also puts on me. He tells me, "let's go." So now I get up and walk with the sheriff to the back entrance of Juvenile Hall. We approach the door and it clicks open. We walk through, and there is another door. It clicks open, and for five seconds.....

Tried As An Adult (Part 2)

...I walk and enjoy my 'freedom'. I am looking at the sky and the trees when I hear "get in the van and watch your step". I snap out of it and look at the sheriff's van. It looks like a cage for animals.

On one side of the van there is a steel bench. In the middle, there is a divider. It looks like some kind of cage (well, technically, it is). There is a bench on the other side. I pick the side I will get into and step into the van. As I get in I am hit hard by this weird smell. Also, I notice it is a lot smaller than it looked from outside the van. But I can't complain. I just sit and wait to be transported to court.

After everyone gets in, we take off. As we leave I look out the back window. I stare at the cars in the parking lot. Then we get to the entrance/exit and the sheriff waits for the cars to go by.

When the time is right the sheriff hits the gas, and as he does that, I push my feet against the floor of the van to keep from tilting over (since I am shackled down and have nothing to hold on to). It works a little, but not that good. So now we're on the road. It feels like the sheriff is going 100 mph! He's not, but it feels that way because I have not been in a car for so long.

As he drives, I look at the people behind us on their way to work or school. I stare at them but they can't see me because the windows are tinted. But then I get tired of staring at them and I tilt my head back and close my eyes because the smell and the twists and turns on the road are making me dizzy.

So I think about who might show up at court to see me. Usually, no one goes, but I don't care. Because I don't go to court to see people. I go to court to fight my case. When I open my eyes, we are in good ole Santa Cruz. (Man, I love that city.) So I move close to the back window to see who is out this morning.

The sun is creeping over the hill so I can see out the back window. Sometimes I see some beautiful girls and sometimes I don't. Most times I just see a lot of people going to work. He drives down the street and turns into the courthouse and straight through the parking lot. I see only a couple of cars in the lot. It's mostly empty. So he drives across the lot and turns into a well that leads under the court house, and now I start to get that feeling in the pit of my stomach....

Tried As An Adult (Part 3)

So now we are at the courthouse and I got butterflies in my stomach. But I put it aside and maintain. The sheriff pulls into the well, which leads to under the courthouse. He drives down the little hill and makes a quick left into a parking lot. Then he puts the van into reverse and backs into another lot across from the one he first pulled into. He keeps reversing until he hits a ramp that we'll use when we exit the van. When he hits the ramp I hear a loud 'boom'

and the ramp slides a little. He stops, puts the van in 'park', gets out and walks to the entrance to the tombs.

On the wall, there is this switch. The sheriff puts his key in and turns it. All of a sudden I hear a noise coming from in front of the van. I look through the windshield and see a big gate/cage coming down from the ceiling. I watch it until it hits the ground. Then I look back toward the sheriff and see that the door to the tombs is open and there are three sheriffs there. One of them walks up the ramp, unlocks the back doors, opens one and then the other. Then there is another set of doors. They're to the cage where the other juveniles (being tried as an adult), and I, will be locked into. The sheriff pulls a lever that opens the door on the side of the cage they'll enter. They come out, walk down the ramp, and are told to wait by the door. He then pulls the lever on my side of the cage and I am released. I get up and walk down the ramp and head toward the others who are lined up by the door.

I do a quick little stretch, because I was locked in that small cage in the van. We wait in line until told to do otherwise. Now the sheriff tells the others that we are juveniles and directs us into the tombs. We step into the entrance and now we are in this small concrete hallway, with two ways in.

The first is the entrance we walked in. The second is at the end of the small hallway, to the left. We walk to the door at the end and when we get there I step through and see another sheriff. He's grubbing on a doughnut and sipping his coffee. He says, "good morning gentlemen," with his mouth stuffed. Then he tells us to stay on the red line and not to get off. So we do as we're told. He then directs us to walk down the red line to where other sheriffs are waiting to search us.

As we walk I begin to view my surroundings. I first look at the red line. It's about one and a half feet wide and it follows the base of a huge wall that rises to a high ceiling. I look up and see more red, because the lights in there are red. It makes the white walls glow red. But it's also pretty dark in there, because of their choice of light bulbs.

I then look to the end of this huge hallway and see about seven more sheriffs. They're slapping on some latex gloves. I take a quick glance to the left and see five doors that are an equal distance from each other. The doors are about ten feet across from the side of the hall we're walking on. Door 1 is for Southerners. Door 2 is for the Northerners. Door 3 is for females. Door 4 is for juveniles. Door 5 is for (I think, but I'm not sure) the people who don't bang, or people who are crazy in the head, and I think for people who are PC'd up. And in this place there are no windows, anywhere. While viewing my surroundings, I am interrupted by a voice that says, "stop right there and face the wall."

I look up and see this sheriff putting on his gloves. He's pretty big and he says again to face the wall. He points to it. So I stop and face the wall. As I do so I am told to extend my hands as far out as I can. I do it and he starts to search me. He starts off with my arms, then front to back, and as he goes for my legs, he grabs my balls, and I say, "Hey." He continues to search my legs and tells me to lift my right leg. I put my knuckles against the wall for support and lift my right leg. He takes off my shoe, hits it against the wall, looks in it and throws it to the ground. He then starts to feel my foot to look for weapons or contraband. He then directs me to lift my left foot. He does the same to it and tells me to put my shoes back on. After they're done searching the others, they say, "turn around and walk to Door 4.

Tried As An Adult, Part 4

As we walk into Door 4 I hear a loud boom and the door being locked behind me. We walk, and take our seats on the concrete slabs around the holding cell. As I sit there, I start to look at the detail of the holding cell. I see it's probably 15 feet long and maybe 8 feet wide. There's a steel toilet with a sink on top. (Same kind as the ones in our cells at the juvenile facility.) It's in the left corner. There's a piece of metal on the side of the toilet so it could help block some of the view. I could also see that there are concrete slabs that go all around this big cell.

I look toward the entrance, the door we just walked through. Now I see why they had the red lights out there. The door was average size and it had a window on it. The window was in the middle of the door and about 2 feet high by 1 and a half feet wide. It was one of those windows where you're not able to see out, but they can see in. They had the red dim lights outside the cell so we couldn't see out. But there were regular lights inside so they could see in. So, when I looked at the window I would just see my reflection. It didn't really work, because we could see outside, a little. But it was funny. I would see the other guys in there try to flex and see who has the bigger chest by looking at their reflection. They argue and push each other around and call each other names. While they do that I just sit there and put my back against the wall and look up. I see that there are two lights on the ceiling - one by the entrance and one toward the back. There is also a small camera in the top right corner at the end of the cell.

Then I close my eyes and think about when I was little and didn't

have a worry in the world. I would think about how I would always want to be with my mom. (I was a mama's boy.) I felt safe next to her, and still do. Then I said in a whisper: damn, where did shhh go wrong? I took myself on a trip, through my memories, back in time to see for myself.

I started at first grade. I saw an innocent little boy, not a down thug that always has a mean mug on while patrolling the barrio looking for trouble. The innocent boy, me, sits in class talking to a friend and being a kid.

I fast forward a little and now I see myself having a good time outside in the school yard. I'm running around, playing and laughing with my friends.

Now I decide to skip a couple of chapters of my life, because obviously, this wasn't the start of my wrong doings. I stop at the fourth grade and see myself bigger and I had a new style and a new group of friends. We are doing some crazy things, but not crazy in the way I'm looking for, so I skip some more and stop at good old 6th grade. Or should I finally say, 'the beginning'?

I see myself in a creased up white shirt and creased up Dickies. I ain't gonna lie. Those creases looked just a little crooked. But now I perfected the creases on my clothes. What more could you want from a youngster coming up? My demeanor was relaxed. Most likely I was high on chronic, and a 'not giving an "ef" attitude'. I see myself walking the campus starting trouble with my enemies. I can see I did not care about anything except homies and gangbanging. Gee, was I wrong.

I suddenly hear a key enter the holding cell door of the tombs. I snap out of it and look toward the door and see a sheriff. He says: C... O... and T... Y.... - Court! So, I guess it's about that time.

Tried As An Adult (Part 5)

So now it's time for court. Myself and the other inmate they call stand up and do a quick stretch. I fix my pants real quick and head for the door. The other inmate walks behind me. When we get to the door I look out toward the red line by the wall. I could see that they had pulled out other inmates from county jail and they were all lined up on the red line. I look to see if there is a familiar face in the line as I walk to take my place in it. I see a homie from the set and I go line up by him. The other guy I was with lines up in front of me. I turn my head to look at my homie and say: Q-Vole carnal. He greets me back and we both look toward the sheriff.

The sheriff says: "Listen up!"

Then he says: "We are going to Department G. You are to walk in and take a seat. There will be no communicating with the audience. If I see any of you communicating with the audience you will be brought down here and locked up. You will also be called last for court. Also, the person you were talking to will be detained and will be brought down here with you, and that person will hate you for the rest of your life. You are to talk only with your attorney, the bailiff, or the judge. Is that clear?"

I hear a couple of "yes sirs" in the line. Then he says: "Let's have a good day in court, gentlemen."

He waves his arms to get us to start walking. My homie and I are in the middle of the line. The line starts to move in the direction of where we first entered the tombs. But instead of making a left at the door - to the concrete hall we first entered, we make a right into a door across from the entrance. We walk in and make a sharp right again. And there are stairs that rise high, about two stories.

The line starts up the stairs, but we are going slow because we all have handcuffs on, and shackles. As we make our way up the stairs, the guy at the front is told to stop at the top. The line stops and we all move to the left side of the stairs. Then the sheriff walks up the stairs to the door at the top. He opens a door and pushes a red button on the wall which warns the POs, judges and people who work there to clear the hallways because there are inmates coming through. After that he says: "Come on and line up by the wall."

The line starts to move and we start walking up the steps toward the door. As soon as we get to the door, we step through and make a right and see inmates lined up by a wall. I walk and take a left into another hall and get in line. We wait until everyone has come up and is in line. As soon as we're ready and all the sheriffs are there, they say "let's go" and direct us down the hall.

We walk down that hall and are told to make a left down another hall. So we turn and walk down that hall. As we get to the end we are told to make a left into Department G. The leader of the line turns in. I can feel myself getting light headed. I waited patiently for this court date to come, and now the time is here.

Tried As An Adult (Part 6, Final installment)

As we walk into the courtroom, it's 8:30am and my legs are weak, so I just stand solid and focus on my task at hand. I look around the courtroom. When we first entered, we came in on the far right side. To my left were some steps that lead up to where the judge sits. We were directed to walk around it and sit in the jury box.

When I took my seat I noticed that the bailiff had not unlocked the courtroom doors to let in our families and the people who have

come for court. I start to talk with my homie and then the judge comes in and says: "Good morning gentlemen."

We greet him back and continue to talk low so the bailiff won't hear and start talking shhh to us.

Soon the bailiff opens the door and the people start pouring in. Everyone takes a seat and I look to see if my family made it and sure enough, no one came. I look at my homie and he's smiling at the crowd. At least he gets to see his family.

The judge calls case after case, and some are interesting, and some are stupid. I just sit back and listen to them. They go from assaults to attempted murders to murders.

I start talking to my homie. After awhile I see my attorney and she comes over and explains what is going to happen and the motions that are going to be made. After briefing me on what is going to occur, I resume talking with my homie.

Finally, after over an hour, the judge says: I'm going to call the matter of... and he says our names. Myself and the other individuals whose names were called are told to stand up. So we do.

Our attorneys come to the jury box to say who they are representing. Then they continue making their motions.

And here comes the DA, saying to the judge how serious this case is. The judge gets mad and says: Don't repeat yourself to me. I understand the seriousness of this case! Me and a couple of other guys start laughing, but not too loud, at the fact that the DA got put in her place. After making their motions, and arguing some, we are given another court date and told to sit down. My attorney comes over and explains what just took place.

After she is done, the bailiff motions to the individuals who are done with court to line up at the door we first entered. Myself and the others stand up and make our way to the door. We go back to the tombs the same way we came, which is through the halls, down the stairs. We go into the tombs straight to the red line. Then I look back at my homie and say: Alrato homie, take care of yourself. He says his goodbyes. I go right through doorway number 4. I sit on the concrete slab and think about what has just happened. I sit there, not saying a word, as what happened begins to sink in, like a body does in quicksand.

Suddenly the door opens and there stands a sheriff and he says "time to go home. So me and the others stand up and exit the room. We walk through the concrete hallway and into the parking lot that has that big ass gate/cage. We step into the van and we head home, through the city of Santa Cruz and into the hills where juvenile hall is.

When we get home, I step off the van, dizzy as hell. The handcuffs and shackles don't make it any better. We walk into the facility and they are taken off. I do the rest of my program and when night comes, it's time for us to get locked down (6:30pm).

As I lay there on my bed I hear 'click, click, click, click' and the lights go out It's 9:00 pm and I fall asleep mad as hell that I've just done another day here at the Santa Cruz County juvenile facility.

-Jesse, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: This is the conclusion of your 6 part series. All the action takes place on one day. The writing is marked by meticulous attention to detail. If you will pay this much attention to every decision you make about your future, we foresee very good things for you. We've enjoyed the series immensely. And, we thank you. We definitely look forward to the next block of writing! Keep us Beat readers posted!

World Goes On Without You

As I lay in my bed tossing and turning I reminisce the days of adolescence, laughing at the stupid times, smiling at the good. And all the b-s in my life, I just block it out and discard it.

Then reality comes back and hits me hard, waking me from my trance of endless thoughts. Then I realize I'm trapped in Juvenile Hall, and my life is going downhill so I just stare at the four walls, absently hoping God will alter my life to a brighter and sunny day because I can't take it no more -- homies getting shot, stabbed and beat.

I don't know what to do but when my time comes I'm gonna take it as it is, because at the end the world goes on without you.

-Vietnamese, 150 Crew

From The Beat: There's an old rock and roll song that says, "all we are dust in the wind". And it's true, our lives end in the blink of an eye and the world does go on without us—but for the one brief moment that we're here, we need to make that time count. During your time here, you count, you have a purpose. Your actions, your tears, your loves, and the beauty you add to or take from the world. So we ask you, now, what do you think your purpose is while you're here? From the way you write we can't help but think that part of your purpose is to set down your thoughts and share them with the world, but maybe in your mind there's another purpose? You tell us.

Words From A Renewed And Starting Soul

Today I am out of jail.
 Never again will I fail.
 No more food that is stale.
 Not sitting wishing for bail.
 Today is my life and today I start it
 No more:
 Weed trees
 Dope fiends
 Crazy dreams
 Living in the streets
 Same old beats
 Killers
 Hatred
 Crack heads
 Stealing
 Bangin'
 Slangin'

Never again will I put myself through that

-Speedy, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: We appreciate every promise you make to yourself in this tight poem. Our definition of failing is to fall without rising, to stumble without getting up. So, you may well stumble along life's road (we all do), but if you get up, dust yourself off, and keep on walking forward, then you will keep your promise never to fail. Good for you!

New Years In Da Halls

New Years is a day that comes only once a year. It's supposed to be the day that people notice or think about what they have done and accomplished during that year. People make New Year's resolutions to themselves for the year coming up, like to do something different to better their lives.

This was the one year that I was locked up during New Years and it wasn't cracking. Being in here in that room makes you think, it makes you think a lot. Like what you did wrong to get here, and if you been here before, why you keep on doing that same shhh, Why?

Well, my New Year's resolution is to change the shhh I do and stay outta jail, and that's for real.

-Sash U6, SF/YGC

From The Beat: The sad truth is that being locked up doesn't make everyone think. Only the mature. Only the thoughtful. Only the ones who understand that their own freedom — their own lives — are so much more important than their drugs, their "fun," their inherited gang codes, etc. We are so glad that you are one who has taken this time-out, and used it to your own benefit by employing that special gift: your brain! If this experience has led you to start thinking in a new way, maybe that's what you needed. Just keep thinking... and keep teaching, as you do here!

The Worst Place I've Ever Been

Tons of concrete blocks surround this place. We don't get any fresh air from the outside. Waking up next to a toilet every day is an unpleasant feeling. The feeling of having no freedom: having to raise my hand to get up, taking a shower when I get told to, and staying in the same cell for more than twelve hours a day.

This is the worst place I have ever been. Having to wake up to nightmares leave me in a puddle of sweat at night. I don't know if I can trust anybody when I come out because my so-called friends snitched me out. Something that wasn't that big, became an enormous case.

I know for sure my family will never leave me. My family supports me through my hard times. I wish I could come out and be with my family.

-James U6, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We don't know if this is your first time or not, but we do know that this experience has opened your eyes, and that can only be a good thing. The one other lesson we're not sure you quite appreciate yet, though, is that if you are doing nothing to be snitched out about — whether something small or big — you won't have to worry about who to and who not to trust. Learn how to live without putting your freedom at risk, and you will be able to trust the one person whose trust counts the most, yourself! Thank you for this piece.

That Person Is Me

That person whom I strive to please is me. I'm the hardest to please 'cause in the end my life still must go on.

In the past, I thought I was pleasing myself, but it really was just me self-sabotaging myself. Looking back at all those impulsive actions, who was I really pleasing? Them! Those devils advocates who will say anything sweet for you to poison yourself.

When the day is over, life goes on. We need to reassess what we really want to live with on our backs. If all those distractions were to vanish, it would be easier for me to please me.

-Bam Bam, Walden House PSK

From The Beat: It sounds like you have learned a lot about yourself and addiction in this program. Once you gain knowledge, you can never unlearn it. Of course, there is no way for all the distractions in your life (or anyone's life) to vanish, so the trick is to learn how to deal with those distractions without letting them hurt you and those you love. Now that you realize who you were really pleasing, you can keep moving in the direction of making your life serve you. You're on your way!

Looking back at all those
 impulsive actions, who was I
 really pleasing? Them!

Boys

Boys

Thinkin' this world is a game

Got these young females going insane

Think they the hardest person ever

But they really the same as everyone else

Runnin' from person to person

Doing nothing but sinning

Boys

Telling these females they love them

Basically using the females

But when they in 850 somewhere

They wanna call for bail

Then, when they get out it's a lot they reveal

Boys

Some boys are sweet and kind

Those the ones that stay on my mind

And those are the ones that's hard to find

Boys

Others just want to use you and leave

I find that very hard to believe

Because I gave you my love, care and passion

And now you wanna run

Boys

Say they're stable, but really

They're unable

-Rosevette U5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Unfortunately, we have to agree with much of your description of how boys act, and how they treat girls and women. But you know, it's a cycle: the boys you know are following the example of the men in their lives, who, when they were boys, followed the example of their fathers, uncles, etc. If fathers are gone, then it's up to mothers to socialize their young boy children to respect females, just as they want everyone to respect their mothers. If the men who make babies are not responsible enough to stay and be fathers, then the task falls on the shoulders of the women who do stay. Unfair? Yes. But desperately needed.

Since You Went Away

It's been five months
 Since you went away
 You left without a word
 Nothing to say
 When I was the one
 Who gave you my heart and soul
 But it wasn't good enough for you
 So I ask God
 To send me an angel
 From the heavens above
 Send me an angel
 To wear my broken heart
 For being in love
 'Cause all I do is cry
 God sent me an angel
 To wipe the tears from my eyes
 And I know it might sound crazy
 But after all
 I still loved you
 You wanna come back in my life
 But now there's something
 I have to do
 I have to tell
 The one I once adored
 That my heart
 Can't take no more
 Lies
 And my eyes
 Are a lot of cries
 So, God
 God sent me an angel
 From the heavens above
 Sent me an angel to love
 Now you have me on my knees
 Begging, please

-Fat Boy LCERS, SF/YGC

From The Beat: When you really get into something that you care about, you can write your heart out. You dedicate this poem to someone else, but we can't put anyone else's business out there, but if you're sincere in your sympathy for this person, it shows what a tender heart you have.

He told me I was stupid so I became street smart

But It Wasn't Enough

He told me I was poor so I went out and robbed,
 but it wasn't enough
 He told me I was weak and that I wouldn't accomplish
 a thing in life
 So I went out and became a fulltime street soldier
 but it wasn't enough
 He told me I was nothing so I became something
 but it wasn't enough
 He told me I was stupid so I became street smart,
 but it wasn't enough
 He told me I was this and that
 But you know what the white man says because
 nothing is never enough
 I gotta do what I gotta do
 And all the problems in my life I'll just block it out
 and discard it.

-Vietnamese, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's never enough when you're trying to fill an inside emptiness with outside promises. Whatever you need, it would never be satisfied by money or street respect or any of that... you're talking about a hunger of the soul here! A hunger for confidence, love, self respect. What's funny is that everything about your poetry and insight says that YOU can satisfy that hunger. You have the soul to feed your own soul, can't you see it in your amazing writing?

LJ

One time I had a dog and I loved him a lot. His name was LJ, I had gotten him from my friend. It took a long time for him to get used to me, but after a couple of days he got used to me and started sleeping with me. We became really close. I took him everywhere I went. When I drove in my car I took him with me. Every time I went to somebody's house he came with me.

If he couldn't come in, I wouldn't either. Wherever I went, he went. When I woke up in the morning and gave him a kiss, I treated him better than my girlfriend. She told me I don't even give her a kiss and tell her good morning. I just loved my dog a lot.

One morning I was sleeping and my dog woke me up. I guess he wanted to go outside, so I got up to open the door. He ran outside and I went back to sleep. Then I heard my dog barking so I got up and went to the door and I saw this lady hitting my dog, so I told my girlfriend to give me some clothes. Then I went outside and got my dog. I asked the lady why she was hitting my dog and she told me he was in her yard and then she called me a nigger and we started fighting and the police came and I went to jail because I had a warrant.

-Young Knight, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Dogs offer something that is difficult to get from other human being sometimes: unconditional love. We suspect that that may have been a reason you were so close with your dog. It's an uncomplicated relationship: you feed your dog and give it attention and the dog is your faithful friend forever. Do you have any relationships with humans that come close to the kind of trust you have with your dog?

I Wasn't Born On Probation

One thing about me that they don't know is that I think I can get off probation if I really try hard enough. But I don't even think it's about even trying, because I wasn't born on probation, so it's not impossible.

I always see or meet people that try to help me. All I think I need is a little encouragement, because I do be trying hard, but something always drags me back to doing what I do.

So what I'm trying to say is, one thing they don't know is I can get off, but I just got to try. If I slip up again, I need to get up and try harder and make sure I don't slip again. But I'm trying right now. Hopefully, when I get out, I can stay out, but that all I got to say. I holla at ya next time.

-Young Drew U4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We admire so much of what you've written here, Young Drew — especially your determination to pick yourself up if you fall. If you're "trying right now" — and we can see that you are — you're already moving forward, even if you can't see the progress yet. Yes, we hope you can stay out this time, too, but hope is not enough. You have to put some meat on the bones of that hope with a real plan: going to school, working if you need to, respecting those loved ones who deserve your respect, and, maybe most difficult of all, the inner strength to say "No" when you know that is what you should say. Keep moving forward.

Disappointed My Mom

My mom was the closest person to me, because she has always loved me and she always used to take care of me. When I was little, she used to come to all my basketball games, and she used to bring her friends.

And now I'm mad, because I cannot please my mom, because I am locked up. That makes me mad, because I can't make her dreams come true. But when I get out, I'm going to make all her dreams come true. And I'm going to please her as much as I can, by going to college and getting out of here. So peace out, Beat. This yo' boy Lil' Sam.

-Lil' Sam, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We can see your mother's angel reading this piece in heaven, smiling and dropping a tear. You will still get your chance to make your mother proud of you, so keep that positive attitude and follow through with your plans.

Something To Help You Out...

Being in here hurt me deep down inside. It took me away from friends and family, but a couple of days passed and I began reading the Bible.

The Bible helped me out a lot. I was dealing with so much stress and worry. I hated not knowing what everyone was doing on "the outs". I had went to court the next day thinking I was gonna be out, but the judge told me that I wouldn't come back if he released me. So he kept me here for another month.

This might not seem so long, but when you don't know anyone, you feel lonely and sad. It continues day by day. So this is one of the reasons I write this to those of you who come to a place like this.

Maybe you'll see that you need to take care of just yourself. Jail might be a place where it's hard, but knowing you're safe is comforting and staff are always there to help. Sometimes they might seem mean but they understand! I'm pretty sure that they've had problems in their lives too. You can always talk to a counselor. They can help give you advice and help you figure out your problems so you can get through it until you get out. I wrote this to help. And we all need help at times.

Please take it and don't leave it. Today, I am a better person and I've figured out that I don't need drugs anymore. I'm better off making good choices and being helpful to others. I thank God that He was there to help me. Do better for yourself while you are doing the time

- Destiny Miranda, SEF Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: Thank you for your encouraging words. This is yet another great message for the Beat Within readers. Your writing says it all...Much thanks.

The Bullet

the bullet feel like a bee sting
that never stops stinging
burn hella bad
make you hella weak
have you thinking about
what's going to happen next
you on the ground
bullets flying everywhere
but you still thinking about
what's gonna happen next
but you hearing voices calling yo' name
telling you — get up get up
that's why being in the ghetto
will have the bullets flying around
people hitting the ground for their lives
bullets don't play
that's why i stay away
but i stay with my heat
for them ninjas that be running the streets
like i said before
the bullet don't play

-Lil' Dirty, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Thanks for one of the best short bullet poems we've ever published. You takes us to the street, make us feel the heat of that bullet's burn, a sting that won't stop stinging but brings you to the ground wondering anxiously what's else is going down. You hear voices telling you to get up! If you can, you do. If you can't, sometimes you're through, sometimes you awaken in a hospital bed, too. No, bullets don't play — but carrying a gun won't stop a bullet from someone, and might even get you killed 'cause they think you might kill them if they don't do you in first. Yeah, stay away from the spot and its gunshots, but stay away from guns, too, 'cause guns are made to shoot — bullets. You don't want to kill or die, so to all guns say goodbye!

Dear Grandma Judy

It's been two years since you passed away on December thirty-first of 2004 at 11:59 PM. I miss you, with passion! And when you left me, it was like a part of me left with you.

I loved you very much, and I know you loved me too. I wish I would have been able to say goodbye! You and my momma have always been there for me when I've needed you — and even when I felt like I didn't. I remember when I was younger and I used to get in trouble and was about to get in trouble by my momma and used to talk my momma out of giving me a whooping.

I know that I haven't been the best grandson, because I used to disrespect you sometimes and used to steal some of your weed that you needed for diabetes and to help you eat more. I want to apologize and tell you that you was the best grandma ever!

I love you and I miss you. Rest in peace. And I hope to make it to heaven to see you. So pray from me and my family, and please watch over us. I love you Grandma JUDY DUPCLAY.

-Torrian, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It takes a man to admit when he was (or is) wrong and ask to be forgiven. And yes, we believe she is still watching over you, but also just plain watching you — so show her that you have learned how to lead a respectful and decent life. Make her proud of you now that she's up in heaven living with the angels. Apologies really have to parts: (1) owning up to your wrong and seeking forgiveness, but also (2) changing your behavior to correct that fault, if not with the person in question, then with others in your life. She'll see it and know it is out of love and respect for her that you're making the effort.

Me and My Brother

The one person it seems hardest for me to please is my brother. He is just one year younger than me. So it seemed like he would actually look up to me in life.

But one thing that makes it hardest to please my brother is that we live different lives — never together, never doing the same things. He wanted me to be hard and tough, but that was not me. But the first time he realized he loved me for me, was when I came here to juvenile hall. Now he misses me and cries every night.

-Kenny, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What a shame you had to come here for your brother to begin to love you for yourself, but it's a good thing that he does. Maybe he can continue to love you for who you are and who you want to become, when you decide you want to live a successful, legal and free life, doing what's right. If he loves you for you, that's what he'll want for you, too.

I'm Afraid

I lay in bed and I'm afraid to close my eyes because all I see is a monster. Every time I close my eyes it wants to take me away from this world of pain and hate. It says it wants to take me to a better place. But I won't go. I run and run.

My life is like a race that never ends. I don't look back because I don't want to see the hate and pain I have caused. The monster I see is what I have created because of my hate and pain. So I have stopped and have begun to look at the monster. I'm starting over because I don't want to live like this anymore.

-A new me, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: Good piece. Yours is the kind of monster that melts when looked at directly, especially when accompanied by good behavior. Good choices dissolve monsters like yours, every time.

... never together, never doing the same things.
He wanted me to be hard and tough, but that was not me

False Judgment

I don't like when people judge me by saying stuff like you're so nice and you're respectful or you don't have a reason to do this or you shouldn't. When Frankly I don't give a damn.

I don't care about what people think I have a way of thinking that puts death of my closet family members in the same category of casualties of war. It don't happen often but when it does, suspect it.

So if you think I'm nice, thanks.

If you think I'm mean, thanks.

If you think I'm cold aight. But just know you have your opinion but I'm me.

-JJ The Jet, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The only opinion that matters, in the end, is your own. You are the only one who can know who you truly are on the inside, and we hope your loved ones and the people who see you on the daily all respect that. But if we told you that we see - in you - a person who is struggling to become a man and find a way to rise up in this world that has so much coldness and suffering in it. If we said we saw honor in you, from the way you write and the way you maintain, would you believe that that might be a true part of you?

The Last Time I Felt Wanted

The last time I felt wanted was a very long time ago.

I never feel wanted

because my mother tells me that I'm a troublemaker
that I embarrass the family
by the problems I give her.

When I felt wanted was when my mother had a lot of
problems

she told me that she had a lot of faith in me
she wanted me to change because she needed my help.

-Jose, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: OK - are you a troublemaker? Are you embarrassing your family? More important even - are you embarrassing yourself? If the answer is 'yes' to any of these questions, perhaps you need to consider that its your own behavior that's causing you to feel unwanted. The chances are, you family members are very concerned about you. They want you to do well and they're feeling as bad for you as they are for themselves.

My Sisters

Smart	Kind
Active	Empathic
Mine	Nice
My mini-me	Drama-free
Young	Right
	Active

Love and respect

-Lil' One SEF, Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: Your two sisters are obviously very important to you. As a brother or sister, we have the responsibility to be a positive and healthy role model to our younger siblings. A younger sister or a younger brother look up to us and learn how to act and how to be "cool". Whatever we do and say, whether that is positive or negative, our sisters or brothers will repeat. Make it a point in your life to be that shining star in your brother or sister's life. Don't forget that actions speak louder than words.

Nothing to do, just wailing in jail

Not one story to tell

Thinking of something to do

Thinking of my life

And now I know it ain't through

A Person Like Me

Living a life of crime you got to know how do it.
A person like me you have to know how to use it
Living on the run is not really fun.

When you see the boys, you have to put away the guns,
You put the dope in the cuts and the weed in a swigger
when you on the streets with funk. All it is to bust that
ninja

I don't know why ninjas don't fight, it's just shot! Shot!
Shot!

We on one tonight. Sometimes it's good, sometimes it's not,
Especially when yo' ninja got shot

When someone you love ends up dead

You lose it in the heat you're ready to want to do kill kill
and kill

When somebody gets hit you on some shhh

You realize the game is real to those who think and to those
who do

Living a life of crime you can get through.

-Tone Tone, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your rhymes are like bullets to the brain/a life of death, a life of pain/there's got to be a way out the misery/tell us how you plan to get free!

Rain

The rain came down like splinters.

It hit my hands. Now, as I walk
against the wind, I do not worry
about the silence night brings...
until I hear the music of the beast,
that is. But I'm glad to say -
this is just a tale, and it's a pleasure
to share it with you.

-Nick, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: This is a beauty Nick. You're getting better and better.

if you think I'm nice, thanks.

If you think I'm mean, thanks.

If you think I'm cold aight. But just know you have
your opinion but I'm me.

Sitting In Jail

Sitting and wailing in jail

Not a story to tell

Just watching the days go by

And wondering why most of my days were all about getting
high

Now I look back to those days

Now it's like a haze

Nothing to do, just wailing in jail

Not one story to tell

Thinking of something to do

Thinking of my life

And now I know it ain't through

-Heather, SEF Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: Excellent writing. We are glad that you have realized that life is not over. We do our time, learn from our mistakes and get back out into the world and go! Unfortunately there is not a lot to do in jail. The good thing is that you are able to write and express those pent up thoughts and feelings. Another good thing is that you have all the time in the world to sit and think. Use that time to your advantage. Keep writing... Keep expressing... Keep thinking... And keep making plans for when you finally get out and can go!

How Am I Gon' Succeed?

Nothin' to do but think and read
 Wonderin' how the hell I'm gon' succeed
 I can't succeed

'Cause I'm stuck in a cell
Wonderin' how to escape
This place I call hell
Keep comin' back
For stupid lil' things
I see moms cryin'

Then my heart starts to sting
Can't do nothin' but promise

I'm gonna do right
Then I get released
And stay out all night

I go back to jail
And curse the world
Thinkin' I'm grown
But still a lil' girl

YGC is not the place to be

Maybe for the others

But not for me
This time when I get out
I hope I do well

'Cause I can't take the sixth time
Locked in a cell

-Sey-Sey U5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We think that part of your problem, Sey-Sey, is that while you're "stuck in that cell," you wonder how to escape instead of using this forced time-out to make real plans. "I hope to do well," isn't enough, as you have now seen five different times! It requires more than hope. You have to make a real plan. Write on paper the things you WILL do when you get out (for example, "I am going back to school; I am not going to smoke; I won't drink..." etc.). You have no problem identifying the things you have to change, so you should have no problem writing out a plan. Without a plan, you will just keep finding yourself wishing that things would be different, and you will just keep shedding more tears. Of course, even a plan is not enough without some self-discipline, and the understanding that you have to sacrifice some of the things you like doing today in order to buy a better tomorrow. We understand why you want to curse the world (and we know you understand that the world doesn't care if you curse it or not), but there is an old saying: "It's better to light a candle than to curse the darkness." Good luck.

Shot Up On The Bus

What's up, Beat? This ya boy, Mike, back up in here. They sent ya boy to a group home and I was doing good at first, but I started messin' up. I ran from the group home, but I went back in five days, 'cause they said I can come back. I ran again, but this time I didn't go back.

I went back to the block and I was doing coo', but the day after Christmas I got shot. Me and my ninja was fighting this other two ninjas on the bus, and the ninja I was fighting, I was beating his ass, so he pulled out his gun and shot me in the side in front of my girlfriend and my sister. The bus was stopped in front of my house when the shooting happened. It was a lot of girls on the bus when it happened.

The bus driver was on the bus, too, but when the shooting happened she got off the bus and ran. It's cool, though, 'cause I'm still walkin' and I'm go be back on the block soon. The bad part about it was that the ninja that shot me used to be my patna, but he ended up being from somewhere else. Stay up and keep ya heads up. I'll be back soon.

-Mike U3, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We gave you a standout because of how well you wrote this piece, but not because of its contents! We have to say right off the bat, Mike, that if you ran twice from the same group home and went right back to the block, you weren't doing "coo," whatever you think. In fact, we seen nothing cool about this story at all, and nothing that you write gives us any confidence that you've learned much of anything — and that is the real tragedy. You brought much of this on yourself, and you're still bragging that you're going right back to the block when you get out of here. We don't know what it will take for you to open your eyes, to wake up, and to grow up, but we hope it happens soon. There comes a point where it doesn't matter if you grow up or not... because it will be too late.

Nothing Worth More Than Freedom

I been in here for 74 days. Gonna be 91 on my next court date. I'm just goin' ta keep it real and tell you the truth like a real ninja will. You already know how I feel. But look, don't trip off the money. It's paper. It comes and goes. It's material. Nothing worth more then your freedom.

I'm in a cage like an animal, but on the street I was acting like a beast just to eat get that money.

-Quez U6, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You are in one kind of cage, Quez, but at the same time, you are freeing yourself from another kind of cage, the one of your own thinking. In the long run, we believe that by liberating yourself from the old way of thinking (the beast on the street), you are preparing the ground for a life of no cages at all. More than 300 years ago, the English poet Richard Lovelace wrote, "Stone walls do not a prison make, nor iron bars a cage." What did he mean?

Looking For A Job

Man, what it do, Beat? Yeah, this Drew. Man, I'm just saying, "What's up?" and I'm trying to get up out of here some time soon. Maybe if I get up out of here, I can get a job or something — maybe working at the Boys And Girls Club with my big cousin or something.

I'm just trying to do something to get paid without the police trying to play me. A lot of people told me I should do that, though. I think a job would be the best thing for me to do. Well, I holla at you next week.

-Young Drew U4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: A legit job is a very good idea because it puts you on a different path, one that doesn't lead back here. But at the same time, school is even more important in the long run, because it not only puts you on that path to success, it also opens up doors you don't even know exist right now. School exposes you to the thinking of others, and seeing the world from other perspectives is always a good thing. One thing this piece tells us is that you are thinking. Not everybody in here is, so keep doing it!

Locked Up And Pregnant

Well...I've been sitting in here for two and a half months, and my 180 days is up on January 4th. I'm going home.

Recently I found out that I'm having a baby girl in two months. I have spent five months of my pregnancy in jail and it's not the ideal situation. When I was two months pregnant, I was bleeding and cramping for six hours and I was denied the right to go to the hospital. It wasn't until my mother threatened to file a lawsuit that I was able to go to General. This past month I had an infection and was not seen for three weeks. And no matter how many times I threaten to file a lawsuit, I still don't get the medical attention I need.

Now that I'm getting out, I have all these court-ordered programs I have to attend. One of the programs is called the "homies" program, which you can't wear your colors and you can't say where you're from, and you're expected to "get along" with people from other gangs. And what makes me mad is I'm not even from nowhere, I'm just "affiliated" by family, because of my big brother has it on his record.

I also have to go to Hilltop, the school for pregnant girls, but hopefully, I will go home and do what I need to do and stay out.

-Snow Biz U5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: We think you have to make some major changes in your priorities from this moment on. You are soon to be a mother, and that should be your sole focus right now. Being a mother is much more than giving birth to a baby. Every animal in the world does that. But being there for your child, guiding her through a life of dangers, keeping her from the mistakes you made — those are what make you a real mother. If you're still thinking of "other gangs," or "your colors," it really doesn't matter if you're "affiliated" by family or by any other means. That is no longer important... or, at least it shouldn't be. If you go to the court-ordered program with your mind where it is, you will neither be helping yourself or your baby. You have a brand-new job to do, the most important in the world. You have a whole lot to learn about that new job, and you should take advantage of every opportunity you have. Get your mind out of the gangs, out of the 'hood, out of the streets and put it where all good mothers-to-be put their minds: on the welfare of their child. Now, your child comes first. Can you handle that?

From The Beat We deeply regret to hear about the loss of your father. We hope that you do not for that experience to affect the rest of your life. That's true: There's nothing as painful as losing the most wonderful moment in the world which is our youth. Our teenage years are the most beautiful part in the world. Don't waste it on things that are not worth spending your time on. We hope that this situation has opened up your eyes and that you now clearly see the things that are convenient in your life.

What Could Be And Will Be Again

Sometimes I sit in my room and day dream about being on da field, a football in my right hand, power with back sweep. Right then it hit me like, "Damn! Look what I could be on the outs doing."

Then when I go to sleep on my new concrete bed in my new unit I dream about the Lincoln vs Galileo. That was my best game ever. We was down 20 to 0. Then, in the second half, I took a 40-yard kick return back. I was the first player Coach Mark ever had take a kick return back. Then the team got hyped up and Ant scored. After that I scored again. Then Tyler scored.

After the game, we wet Coach Mark with hella Gatorade and went to the middle of the field and started going dumb while the Lincoln players was crying.

Then they woke me up on the loud speaker... "Five minutes to breakfast ..." Damn, I wish I was out.

-Scari-B U6, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Besides the sense of accomplishment and real excitement you manage to convey in your description of that great game, you reveal yourself here to be a natural leader, and one who could still achieve his dreams. It's time for the leader you are to lead yourself back to the field to score. They can't take your dreams away from you, but they can take you away from your dreams. Don't let them do it. And don't do it to yourself!

What It Is

I'm 16 years old. I might just be my mother's child, but in all reality, I'm everybody child. Nobody raised me. I was raised in this society.

-Hot Rod U7, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Are you surprised that the shortest of your three pieces is the one we've selected as a standout? The reason is that you have hinted of some very deep thoughts here. But the reason it is not more than a standout is that you have only hinted. Can you add more to this? Can you tell us why you say nobody raised you? Can you tell us what you mean when you say you were raised by society? Can you tell us what "society" means to you, and what your life tells us about society? Those are all worthy questions, and we are hoping you put your mind to answering them.

People Got Me All Wrong

People think I'm just this bad-ass girl that doesn't have a path, a goal, a dream, but it's not even true. People misperceive me because of the way I walk, act, look, speak — just everything.

I do in fact have dreams and goals that I want to reach. I want to go to college, become someone famous. And I do want to do something with my life. But my whole family thinks I ain't goin' nowhere, because I'm doin' drugs, stealin', gettin' locked up, and running away. But I tell myself this: I learned something and I got somethin' outta it. I got experience from it.

But just 'cause I did it, don't mean I'ma still do it. And even if I do it, don't mean I'm not gonna succeed. I want to go to Julliard for violin, 'cause I stay playin' that instrument, or I want to do performing arts, because I got vocals.

-CeCe U4, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Going to college is a worthy goal, and we know if you pursue it, your world view will change. But if you think that you can still do the things that have led you to lose so much time — the drugs, the stealing, the running away — then we're afraid your family will be right. Look, CeCe, if you play the violin, sing and have musical skills that lead you to want to go to Julliard, why in the world would you put all that at risk by thinking you can keep doing the same as before without facing the same consequences as before? Wanting to go to college and be famous is just not enough. What's missing from this "plan" is any sense of sacrifice now for something you want even more tomorrow. We hope you gain a little needed maturity so that you are able to move to that next level and make your dreams come true. The Bible says there's a time to put away childish things. We think that time is now.

In My Life

In my life
Every time I open my eyes
In the morning
I wish not to meet my demise
Not today, nor tomorrow
But until my time
To get myself
Where I'm supposed to be
One step at a time
I'm heavily lurking to see
Who's going to keep me down
If loved ones help me up
Then, fo' sure
I'm a reach my crown
I'm heading to the top
So if they hate
They gon' frown
I asked for help
An' they was nowhere around
So, in my life
I gotta get myself
Up from the ground

-Moso LCRS, SF/YGC

From The Beat: It sounds, from your poem, that somehow you're putting your life out there at risk every day? Where do you believe you're really supposed to be or want to be? What kind of help do you want those who love you to give you? It's a real shame and tragedy that no one would help you when you already asked for it. Are you becoming stronger and more self-reliant because for now you have no one backing you up? Can you ask for help again, when you're free? Do you have an uncle, a teacher, a neighbor, or a friend whose father or mother, someone you trust, to go to? We hope so.

My Baby Momma

The person that I'm close to is my baby's momma, feel me? That's my family. She just a lil' older than me, so she's my momma outside my momma. She 20 years old, about to be twenty-one January 10th, so since she's older than me, she think she be hoppin' on my bump, but she don't, feel me?

We have our ups and downs, our arguments or whatever, but we still love each other. But, eventually, after we calm down a few hours later, we're arguing again, so to me, I can't seem to make her happy.

I mean, most of the time we're coo', because we be in the house, laid up, but when I get up to go to San Francisco, then it's a problem. If I stay in the house, then she'll be happy for however long I stay in the house, for that's how long she gonna be happy. But then, again, I always tell her I can't stay in the house every day, but I can't blame her, because a lot of times she caught me wit' girls, feel me? But I'm committed to her, I'm dedicated to her—that's my other half. I'm not complete wit'out her. She's a part of me, so sometimes it feels like I can't please her unless I stay in the house an' cuddle up wit' her an' look at TV or play family games like Monopoly or something.

But if you know me, you know I just turned seventeen years old in November, so staying in the house is boring to me. I'm tryna get out an' have fun. I mean, I want my baby's momma to be happy, but I can't stay in the house all day.

Now that I'm in here, I think about that shhh. Like, damn, I be tellin' her when we talk on the phone, "It's your turn to be happy." But I should've made her happy before I came in here, because she always makes me happy, an' that ain't fair, because we're in this together. So that is one person that's close to me and that I love, feel me? But holla back, Beat.

-Young Jeff LCRS, SF/YGC

From The Beat: You've put a lot of heart and thought into your relationship with this lady and your baby daughter, yet as a 17 year old, you still find it equally important to be out and about running with friends and more females. So what will it be? Loyal to your lady and child, or solo and on the streets? Choose wisely, 'cause we would hate to read how you threw it all away.

Mischaracterized And Misjudged

TBW (The Beat Within): A couple of weeks ago you talked to The Beat Within about how Black people stereotyping other Blacks hurts so much, and that much of the stereotyping had to do with what classes people perceived others to be in. What you said was very interesting. In that interview you talked about how it seems to you that upper class people look down on, feel superior to and discriminate against poor, homeless, even working class people. In this interview, we'd like to ask you if you also think that people from the lower classes also have stereotyped ideas about people who are in the upper classes, and more about what happens when people in your own race mischaracterize and misjudge you by making assumptions about you, according to how they assume what class you're in.

DB: Okay. Go ahead.

TBW: You've already explained how people from upper and middle classes tend to look down on those they think are poor, but is it also true that people in the lower or working classes also stereotype those they think have a lot of money?

DB: Yes, I think so. They have an image that higher-class people are rich, live perfect lives, have no family problems and come from a good background. Lower class people are wrong to stereotype upper class people, because they don't have good lives. I say this because they have problems they try to hide behind—smiles and friendliness, problems like drug addiction, they're alcoholics, they have troubled kids and even a history of being physically abused or sexually abused.

Look at Michael Jackson. He probably wasn't physically or abused, but I know he was verbally abused. He had no friends, so that's why he bought a big piece of land and bought an amusement park so he could get little kids to come to his amusement park and sexually abuse them.

TBW: So you do believe that Michael Jackson sexually

abused little kids?

DB: Yeah.

TBW: What other mistakes do people from the lower classes make about those they think represent the higher classes?

DB: Having a lot of money. Lower class people tend to think we can go to rich, higher-class people and ask them for money, and they tell you no. You get mad and say that they stingy when they really just tryna get by, just like you.

TBW: So you think that poor people make assumptions about rich people that are unfair? That people with money won't share what they have with the poor, but that they do, at least sometimes?

DB: They don't have to share. It's no law. You can do whatever you want with your money. But you should help people that's strugglin', not doin' so good. I'll put it like this: Don't give a dope fiend money, buy 'im some food, because he goin' go try to buy dope with it.

TBW: So you're recommending that people don't encourage anybody addicted to keep it up by giving them cold cash, but to help them stay alive by buying them food, giving them clothes, coats, offering them a job if you have one, etc?

DB: Yeah.

TBW: What you say is very interesting, DB. Thank you so much for continuing your interview about how, to you, stereotyping works. It sounds like you've been personally victimized by people misunderstanding or mischaracterizing you. Maybe you can tell The Beat about your personal experience with stereotyping next week.

DB: Okay.

TBW: Thanks again.

-Db LCRS, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Being good hearted, kind, wise, knowledgeable, successful doesn't necessarily have anything to do with being rich or poor, just as you've implied. Those qualities transcend economic labels. Can you give The Beat more examples, outside of an interview, but more in a commentary written by you of men or women in any race, whom you think is smart, openhearted, a success in whatever s/he is striving to do, and is poor? There must be many, so who, by your judgment, qualifies in those categories? Thank you for another thoughtful interview.

Brace And Chance The Dogs

In my life I've had a lot of dogs like one named Brace. I had him since he was a baby. He used to chase me up and down the house. I'd hide in my room. He'd bang the door with his head. When he got big, he jumped on my bed with me. He got so big we had to put him outside. When I went to feed him he'd run into the living room and hide under the table and lay on his belly so I wouldn't find out him out.

I came home one day and he was gone. My grandparent gave him away. Now there's a new but old dog that's funny. His name is Chance and he's the closest to a human. I know when he takes a shhh he sits in the grass and wipes his butt. And when he's sleepy, he'll look at you in your bed until you rise the cover and jumps in, gets comfortable and starts to snore and once I was eating something and he started to drool until I gave him some food. He's a funny dog.

-Mando, 150 Crew

From The Beat: The best thing about dogs is what they teach us about humans, since we're all animals. Thanks for sharing your dog stories!

I Try, But Nothing Changes

One person that is hardest to please is my stepfather. I try, but I know I could try harder. But I be thinking, like, why even try. For example, I get good grades, and when he see them, he still look the same, like there ain't no effect. I do this for him, but there ain't no difference.

-Pj U5, SF/YGC

From The Beat: Okay, PJ, this is something about you that not everyone knew — for example, we didn't know. We are sorry your stepfather won't acknowledge your efforts. He ought to. But in the end, you are doing these things not to please him, but to make your own life easier in the future. Maybe one day he will look at you with open eyes and see what he's missed. Keep getting those good grades.

What People Don't Know

What people don't know
That I am sensitive
That I have a heart.
What people don't know
Sometimes I sit in my
Room and cry because I
Feel like people are mad
Because the stuff that
I do and the discussions I've had.
What people don't know
Just 'cause I'm telling
Y'all this, don't take it like
I'm a sucka
I'm just expressin' how I feel.
What people don't know
I love myself but I love
My boyfriend too
Only because he loves me.
That's what people don't know
I don't give him money
'Cause he pays attention to me
And enough attention, enough.

-La Shawnti, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Do you feel if you show people that you are gentle and sensitive that they will think less of you, or take advantage of you? Do you feel like it's something you have to hide? If so, what kind of situations can you put yourself in so you don't feel like you have to hide your true self, but instead that it will make people respect you more? One thing you should know, is that we at The Beat value sensitivity and having a heart!

Dizzy's Acting Show

Dizzy gonna act tonight. The title of his piece will be: "How the Dealer Killed the Crackhead". It's a serious topic, but it will be funny though. [D = dealer; C = crackhead]

D: (Stand up. Cool. Wait for somebody.) Want some dope from me? (While he's standing there, a crackhead walks toward him.) You want something?

C: (With a crazy look on his face:) Yeah! I want meth' and her'on!

D: It'll be fifty bucks. (Dealer looks around to make sure no cops there. Crackhead gives the dealer fifty cents.) Yo! It ain't no bills! It's quarters! What the hell! No drug! No deal!

C: (Gets mad and acts crazy.) Gimme my ... I paid ...

D: Man, you messed up! All right, I'll give you one sample. (Gives the crackhead drugs. Thirty minutes pass, and the dealer is walking home.) Man! Who is that on the ground? Oh man, it's him. Oh no! I just killed him! (Then he shouts:) Somebody call 911! This crackhead ninja is dead! (Then he walks away, ain't helping or nothing.)

-Dizzy Dwan, 150 Crew

From The Beat: That drug dealers help nothing is true, and that their product kills is true, too. But more than that, it destroys families, takes food off a child's table and sets him up to be caught up in the same game that destroyed his family and had him going hungry. If you rolled the time back, what, a year, that crackhead might have had a job and been bringing home steady pay to his wife and kids, or maybe the crackhead is the mother of children herself. She dies in the street, and Granny's getting too old to properly take care of her daughter's children. And the drug dealer looks cool till he catches a bullet or maybe a murder rap for some other scandalous fool. Well, thanks for the little play, but remember to emphasize the fact that crime doesn't pay ... in the long run. It's all a set up to die by the gun or become a slave of the penitentiary system.

This Life

i be the gangsta
strugglin' and stressin'
but still livin' the life i got
so without this day livin'
i would be stuck
it's hard 'cause misery
goes through my head
like a bullet pierces me
then i'll be dead
you know i still gotta be the man
be the man to understand
to be knowin' the game
lil' youngsta like me
gotta stay the same
so yada-i-mean
the block's baby gangsta team
now it's just the way i feel
to know a ninja like me
i gotta keep it solid and real
by the way i do this
i think to myself
i'm'a superstar
team baby ridin' in a fancy car
doin' it and stay out of bars
teamwork

-Lil' Babydaddy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's a symptom of desperation when you go from despair and misery to an inflated sense of your own personal history. It's like you need the latter dream to fight off the threat of all that misery. In reality, it's precisely a youngster like you that needs to change and not remain the same, 'cause all this life will bring you to is pain. Your young enough now that you have a whole lifetime to gain if you can set you goal on getting out of the gangster game. That bright, shiny, new car feels good when you're up in it, but soon fades to a memory less vivid than a dream when you've been locked up for a minute. So stay out of bars by keeping it solid with yourself and not your team's other falling stars — 'cause hard as it's been, it gets harder in the pen'. Be the one on your block to stay free. Independent thinking is key!

My Friend's Doggie Got Drunk From Rice Wine

You know about those Buddhist shrines that are in Asian people's homes? Some people have teacups and put alcohol in them, like rice wine. So one day I was at my friend's house with his doggie, whose fur is gray and furry and his face is hecka furry, too. And this little doggie was in the room with the cups of rice wine and he drank all three cups. Then, like, fifteen minutes later, we noticed the dog walking into the wall face nonstop. Then my friend picked the dog up and he smelled the alcohol on it and he figured out it was drunk. It was trippin' though.

-Jason LCRS, SF/YGC

From The Beat: That rice wine, like sake, can wipe anything out, especially a young puppy. Did your friend put his Buddhist shrine up higher on the wall, now, so his doggie won't get drunk anymore? We hope the puppy has recovered and is now a new clean and sober pup!

Two Dogs

I remember I had two dogs, the first dogs name was Kojak. I had that dog until he got old and they had to put him to sleep. That dog was my everything. That dog was a German Shepard.

The other dog's name I had was Seacrete. It was a pit bull and she followed me everywhere I went. I loved that dog after Kojak died. I put so much love in Seacrete. No matter what I did she followed me, even when I went to school. I had to put the dog in my friend's backyard just to get her from following me. One day she hopped over the fence, went in the street and came back. It did the same thing again but got hit by a car and died.

-Sir Nikko, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's unfortunate what happened to both of your dogs, but that's the way it is sometimes. At least you were lucky enough to have had those experiences with your dogs. It sounds like you loved your dogs, and Seacrete sounds like she really loved you. Do you have a dog now? If not, do you plan on getting another dog in the future?

Born On The Turf

I was born on the turf in Oakland, CA., where we go for what we know, and try to sell everything for twice what it's worth. If you a ninja, watch yo' head. If you a female watch yo' purse. Everybody grindin' for a scrapper on deuces.

But our generation keep getting worse. Next thing you know ninjas gone be drinking around the town in an all black hearse.

I was born into a drug war and everyday I am startin' to feel like my life is crushed. Would I be around if I abuse it, 'cause man I ain't ask to come to this earth. This is Lil' Brian and I just goin' on what I know.

-Brian, 150 Crew

From The Beat: What you know is a lot. You know that you were born into a bad situation that you didn't choose. That there's a drug war going on in the streets. That brothers are killing brothers and sisters are killing sisters. What's it going to take for you to see beyond the streets and beyond the place you were born, so you can step up and out of this dangerous place you were born?

Thank You To Staff

What it do, Beat! I just want to say thank you to staff who look out for me, calm me down, keep me cool — DB, Ms. B, Richie Rich, Numa, Temple, Borudy, Mr. Williams, Ms. Taylor, Gil, teachers as well as Mr. Smith, Mrs. Reed, Almanza, Ms. Banks, Mrs. Winn, Mr. Alan, Ms. Overhall, Lockhard, Jonathan, Cousin Tubby, Ms. P.

-Anonymous Detainee, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Even though you didn't want to share your name, thanks for sharing some of the names of those who show up day after day, week after week, who take the time to speak to a youngster, share wisdom and bring relief. Major props to all of these counselors and more. And thank you for writing this piece, for shore.

They Don't Know Nothin' About Me

While I'm in here, people keep talking trash about me. They don't know nothing about me. They act like they do know. It makes me pissed off!

They're laughing and joking about me. I don't care what people say. As long as it's just talking, nothing bothers me. Someone told me they say, "You can't fight nobody 'cause you scared like a cat." So they're laughing, and I tell them, "Go ahead and laugh all you want, but if I'm out there on the street — you better watch your back. You don't know nothing about me, so stop acting like you know me."

One thing they don't know about me, is my background, my history. So they better be careful what they wish for.

-Dwan, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You don't have to threaten them, even if that's how you handled things in the past — not just with threats but with violence. Just tell yourself and them, too, that they'll still be locked up because they didn't change, while after you're released, you'll be out to stay — because you've learned how to walk away from creating new problems because you'd rather solve them than lose your cool and start swinging like a fool stuck in the system 'cause the common sense he needs to stay free is just plain missing. Don't even bother to threaten them, just set your goals and pursue them with singleness of purpose that will have you getting them — while revenge just gets fools unhinged and brought back in here. So stay calm and clear.

My Grandfather's Hard to Please

In my life, my grandfather is the hardest to please, because he doesn't care about how good you try, he's always talkin' about how good all the other people are doing, like my cousins and distant relatives.

And every time I'm home 'cause I'm sick or something, he will be like, "So you're trying to skip school, huh!" And then he'll be like, "Your cousins don't, or your sister doesn't, miss school!" And when I do go to school, he'll be like, "You better pass your classes!" And he will never say that to my sister.

And at the end of every school year, he'll be like, "You better graduate from high school, or you'll be working in Burger King!" Or, "..., you'll end up in the streets!" So that's my story about the person in my life I just can never please.

-Lost-in-the-system Raj, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's hard when someone you love is always seeing what could go wrong or could be going wrong, or how you might fall short, to the exclusion of recognizing and praising you for your successes in life. You're sure that he doesn't also praise you, but what sticks in your mind are these digs at you? For sure, we remember more clearly when someone hurts our feelings than when they offer faint praise. It's too bad he can't realize the harm he's causing, but it's still on you to limit the harm as best you can — keep your head up, get out the system and get that diploma. If you're stuck for a long time in the system, get it while you're here, or pick up a GED, or both. Do it for yourself if for no one else!

Come Anew

What's up with it, Beat? I always write to y'all — and don't never see my word in here! Usually it's raps, but today's a new day. So I'm a do something new.

December twenty-eighth, I turned eighteen! Yeah, it's weak being in jail on your birthday, but shhh happens; so I'm gonna walk it out. But I took my eighteenth birthday differently than the ones that came before. I feel like I've been born again!

Even though I got to do six months in Camp, I'm gonna start anew — new people, new environment. I'm gonna even try new things, because all the old shhh I been doing for so long, it ain't workin'! It's the same shhh, same result. So that's why I feel I need to come anew!

-F, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Very cool! Some people figure it out the first time they come here. For others it takes longer. But what counts is that you commit yourself to doing whatever it takes to make this the last time you come to lock up. You might come back for a short visit if you mess up at Camp, but ride it out and don't run, and when you're done — don't look back. Get and stay on track!

The East Bay A's

Not that many people know that I'm a huge baseball fan!
So let me update all of us inmates on the latest baseball
news!

The Oakland A's are no longer going to be the "Oakland" A's! They're going to be called the "East Bay A's" — and their new coliseum is being built off Auto Mall Parkway in Fremont! They say the new coliseum is going to be big. And nice as PacBell Park in Frisco.

Also, I just wanted to add in that Barry Zito, one of the A's best pitchers has been bought by the SF Giants! But hey, at least he's still playing for the Bay! That's all that matters.

I'm excited for the new "East Bay Athletics" — because y'all know it's all about the East Bay! Yadda feel me? Always.

-Sassy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Two Barry's on the same San Francisco Bay team! Sounds like a dream. And the As on their way to Fremont! Ch-ch-changes! It has a good sound though, the East Bay As! As we understand it, however, the deal is still in process. So don't count your chickens before they hatch, as the saying goes. But thanks for the update, 'cause just like you, we think Bay Area pro baseball is great!

Be What You Want to Be

I've been asked a question so many times in my life, and it's almost the most real thing I've ever been asked, taught, or learned. It's: What do you want to be when you grow up?

When other people were asked, they said they wanted to be doctors and some said lawyers, firemen, police officers, and so on. When I was asked, I kept it solid and said, "I don't know!" I guess I'd say that because I didn't see myself wanting to try hard to be something I didn't really want to be, like a doctor, a fireman, a police officer, or whatever.

I didn't want to be any of those things, and the reason why is: With every action, there is a reaction; and the actions I was already taking, I was able to deal with people's reactions to what I'm doing. So the way I see it is: This world is like a puzzle. Everybody has their own piece in the puzzle, but when you solve it, they're all together in one picture.

-Dre. 150 Crew

From The Beat: I we include you getting locked up as one of the reactions to what you've been doing out there, then how well are you really dealing with that? 'Cause for sure you don't want to be here, right? So, in a way, you're not dealing with it well at all, because the best way to deal with it — is to stop getting caught up for what you're doing. You feel? You still can't think of any type of regular job outside the mob that you'd want to do for money?

My Dad Is Hard to Please

Sometimes I feel like my dad is hard to please, because he's so dedicated to seein' me be better than him. Sometimes I think he gets carried away! I can't stand the way he talks to me.

I feel like he tries to make me feel like a little kid, and I'm damn near a grown man! I try so hard to do right, but with everything I do, he has to make sure it was really all the way wrong first, just to say what's right. That makes me feel like, "What's the point?"

-Sonny, 150 Crew

From The Beatles Isn't it a trip when the way someone gives us good advice makes us feel so bad that we can't really feel the good part, can't take it in and own it for ourselves. Instead, we feel disrespected and put down until, all because of the way the other person talks to us, we don't even feel like trying. It's a trip, 'cause look where it leads: places like this! That's why they say when you're really ready to change, you have to want to do it for yourself, not for someone else — for you!

Messy Hall + Broads =

grey falls
white walls
pink tile
long halls
messy broads
stupid taggin'
on the walls
hair brushes and combs
not allowed in yo' rooms
pencil, marker or pens
(shhh they don't know i snuck this in)
county bras and draw's
nasty broads
not givin' a what at all
ain't brushed they' teeth
but tryin' to make a collect call
talkin' all that shhh
but ain't doing nothing at all
staff ain't lettin' me take off
tryin' to bang
but ain't even in a gang
this ain't time to earn fame
stop making yo'self look lame
go get tamed
'cause you a broad wit' no game
step yo' game up
'cause this sight is all wrong

-Jen, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It is nicer for everyone when each of us can take care of ourselves and our immediate environment, however much we may dislike where we are. On the other hand, it's just as important to be compassionate and understanding of the feelings of those around us. It's easy to get to feeling pretty low in a place like this, and empathetic encouragement to "keep your head up" works better than adding to the stress to the mess.

Dreams

Why is it so hard
For me to become my dream?
Can it be the fast money?
I don't think so
Can it be the guns or the homies?
No, it can't be
I know what it is
I'm just scared
To make a change in my life

-Babies LCRS, Sf/YGC

From The Beat: You know best. How would you like to change your life? What goals outside of whatever you do with the fast money, guns and homies, do you have? If you have the nerve to write about being scared to change in The Beat, you probably have the courage to change any way you want!

I Think About a Lot

When I'm in my room, and I'm just laying down, I think about a lot! Sometimes I think so much, that I can't even sleep!

I think about how many girls I've had sex with, and honestly, I lost count. I'm not ashamed though. I think about how every dollar I touched since being a baby 'till now, if I'd saved it, how much would I have?

I think about the world and how it's all confused — and I'm in it! I think about the universe and how there are a million more galaxies, and I wonder if there are aliens. I'm just always thinking. So that's it.

-Dre, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You have both an interested and interesting mind. Thanks for sharing a few of those incessant thoughts with us. Do spend any time thinking about what it will take to keep you out of lock up? Do you think about what you need to change in your life to stop doing the things that bring you back here?

If Looks Could

if looks could be heard
then people would hear
the words of right and wrong
hear the tasteless razor
that cut the throat
of a midway adolescent
and never finished the job
so i choked on my own tongue
as i feel on my face
before she hung me
as at the sun i was staring
and as the moon glanced at me
i healed
but now if looks could kill
then my profession would be glaring
i feel no sympathy
no remorse
no more caring

-King J, 150 Crew

From The Beat: It's a pattern pretty typical of intense "romantic" love, this sort of swing from adoration to detestation. And yet it makes us wonder if selfish love warrants the name of love at all. We do understand that love requires vulnerability, which opens one up to heartbreak — from which you say you've healed. We're not so sure of that, but imagine this sort of rage to be but a stage of the healing process — if it ever was truly love, this antipathy too will pass.

\$90 Million On This New Hall!

This new hall got me messed up. This shhh like a baby pen. You gotta sleep on a concrete slab with a lil'-ass bed that you can't really sleep on good. Then you got a toilet in your room. They use a lil' button to open your door.

I'm scared sometimes, like what if it's a fire, and they can't get to the button in time to open our doors? Then what? But I know what. When I get out I'm not coming back! True story, man. This ain't where it's at, on mamas.

-Scari-B U6, Sf/YGC

From The Beat: If you keep the promise you make here — not to come back — then maybe the understandable fear you sometimes feel behind those locked doors will move you out of this life forever! The terrible truth is that, even with the concrete slab and commode in your locked cell that opens with the push of a button by some unseen hand — this is a garden party compared to state prison. Get it together and lead yourself out of here for good!

Back Again!

This yo' boy, "Doug E. Fresh" coming from 150 Hall! Well, here I am again, locked up. I been on the run from Camp for about three-and-a-half months. It was coo' being out, but what wasn't coo' is what I was doing to support myself.

Mainly yo' boy was into armed robbery, because that's just how I get down — and those who know me, know I gets down! I came back to jail on something petty. Luckily it wasn't one of them robberies. But hopefully the judge blesses me ... again!

Don't let the street smarts fool you. I was out there doing something positive. I got my GED at Camp; I had just got accepted for financial aid for college, and I had just applied at Chabot! So, I was doing something.

But I'm just going to get past this obstacle, like I always do, by staying strong. But for everybody else that find their situation stressful, I just want to tell you to always keep your head up, because things will always get better.

-Doug E Fresh, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We're proud of you for getting some positive things accomplished, 'cause now that you know you can do it, it should make it easier to go back to it and this time see it through. On the other hand, the square-thug routine will always have your positive accomplishments held in some risk, 'cause when the thug takes a fall, the square goes to jail with him! So accentuate the positive and eliminate the negative. Hope to see you at Camp!

Daddy?

did you ever take me a bath
do you remember my soft little hands
that you burned
from the cigarette in your hand
were you there while mom gave me birth
were you there when i fell and got hurt
'cause i don't remember
you helpin' me dust off
"the dirt"
you did
while i was a kid
mom said you went to work
but you was really wit' yo' "work"
to me it sounds berserk
it makes my heart hurt
makes me wanna bury you in the dirt
put you in a hearse
and when i'm not there
to watch you being lowered to your grave
i'll say
"i wasn't at work for the day"
winning and dining
is where you'll find me
with a smile rather than a grief
i'm sure you can't believe
these words are coming from me
but i can't sit around here and pretend
that you got that daddy rank at ten
what did you think
"we were friends"
come on now
let's not pretend
ten plus three equal
when i shut your door
and threw away the key
i know — i too can't believe
you left before i could turn three
feel pity for you — oh please
you need to find you a dream
or check in with reality
because i'm daddy-free
no i'm not counting pete
— feel me
i'm sure you don't
but he will when he reads
he's the "daddy" that encourages me
even though he's locked up
in the penitentiary
he still got time for me
you may not believe
but if you could only see
he's got mad love for me
no — not daddy or dad —
it's d-p.

-Jen Jen, 150 Crew

From the Beat: We'll assume DP means "daddy pete" and as for ten plus three, well, ten plus four equally leads to locked doors and tight quarters six feet deep, 'cause it's not which gang but the simple fact that you bang that will destroy every child, woman and man united with a family plan. With all that said, your poem is a savage manifesto of freedom from fantasies of a daddy always true and coming to save you when he's the one who abandoned you. However, you seem to be exploding with anger on many different fronts, and we have a hunch it's a stage you must travel through on the way to creating a new, responsible and independent you. When that's accomplished, then maybe you'll be ready to listen even to what this man has to say about loving you, because it sounds like he's trying to tell you that it's true. We're not saying you have to believe, but when the anger subsides, it will be appropriate to grieve, perhaps not the man in reality but the father to you he never could be when you were young and in need. Terrific poem, but we worry about anger blinding you to what needs to be done for you both to get to be home and manage to stay home free. What do you need in order to find a little serenity (and please don't just say weed).

My Fiance and My Son

My fiance and my son are the two most important people in my life! I have happiness and joy when I am around these two precious people. These two people mean the most to me because I plan on spending the rest of my life with these two. In my heart and in reality, I would give my life for these two people.

I am about to go to Camp Sweeney for the second time, and I am about to complete my program — because I am about to be eighteen years old in February of this year. I love my son Isaac who is about to be one year old in February, and I love my fiance Esther who is about to be sixteen in February, too! Happy birthday to my family! Forever my heart will be wholly yours. Love always and forever! — your man and your father.

-Snoopy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You definitely have your heart in the right place. The only question remains is whether you can get your head in the right place to stay out there with your family after your release from Sweeney. Happy birthday to all three of you! And many happy returns!

Home

can't wait to go home
been here forever
through sunshine, rain
even stormy weather
when i get out this time
i'm solo bolo
somebody asks me to do something stupid
that's a no no
i'm almost eighteen
so it's time to get my grown man
i'm forcing myself to the right way
because i hate on the wrong
i know when i get out
i'm gonna have a lot of challenges ahead of me
but i'm not gon' go cut
'cause i'm a boss from berkeley
even though i'm in here
it's teachin' me a lot
by sendin' my ass to school
instead of the corner block
i love who i am
so i gotta stop hurtin' myself
find a legal way
to make my wealth

-Lil' Larry, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You've got your head right, but you have to stay patient on your path before the dividends start to amass. Getting life right instead of wrong, takes more than just staying strong ('cause then sooner or later you break weak). So use your intelligence, your heart in changing both the way you act and the way you speak. Keep talking like you do here, and you're sure to achieve success and happiness.

Stephanie

Stephanie, you were there when we were blue
You were there when we didn't have a clue
You left without saying good-bye
And we didn't have a chance to go out and fly
Remember that I never say good-bye
I say I'll see you soon
RIP (1988-2003)

-Maria, SEF Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: It is so sad to lose someone close to you. There are so many feelings that we go through when we are grieving a loved one. Anger, denial, depression, guilt... As time passes, we usually come to accept that our loved one has moved on and is physically gone from our lives. It is so important to talk about and remember that person. Just because they are physically gone, does not mean that they are gone from our minds and spirits. They will always live on in our hearts, our memories and of course in beautiful writings such as this. Thank you for sharing Stephanie with us.

Interviewing Travis

Who is the person you want to please?

The person I want to please is myself.

How?

Well, I am tryin' to be like my older brothers; tryin' to get money and be living in the fast lane; tryin' to live up to half and half to my brothers and my dad — to be bigger!

Bigger plans?

I wanna buy houses, move my family and then sell 'em. But my family isn't thinking about that. They're just thinking about getting money. That's why I am bigger than them. I mean, one part of me feels like it's stuck out there in "the life", and the other part of me is just hidden. In order to make this inner part shine, I am gonna have to work harder to achieve my goals, 'cause I am not gonna get anywhere by just selling drugs.

How are you going to work harder?

Leave my bad ways and come to new ways, like my friends and new associates, so that the old ones can quit pullin' me back.

Do you think you can really do it?

Yes, if I put one hundred per cent into it — and I do want to put that one hundred per cent into it!

Motivation/Inspiration?

A lot of people wanna see me do good, like my dad, my uncle, my auntie.

Do you think this is a wake-up call?

Yes.

-Choyce, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We cannot recall any of your older brothers actually setting their minds while they were in here to changing how they live on the outside. And any real change has to begin with a decision to change, which you are doing right now — making that decision. And you're thinking about other ways to make money, like fixing up a house and selling it to by a better house, fix it up, etc. We've seen families move from the flats to the hills just that way. Glad you're awake today! We hope you do get the chance to prove you've got what it takes to make your own breaks.

Me, Myself and I

Lost a lot of things in life
Aching all over with pain
Coming from a bad life
Hoping life will get better
And only adventure can go so far
Very sad, if you only knew
Every life has tragedies
Never give up!

-Lala/SEF Maricopa County

From The Beat: Every life does have tragedies and tragedies are hard to manage. But your words speak hope. Never give up! When we face hardships and challenges, we must remember that these are temporary obstacles in our lives. The hard times and hurt feelings will eventually pass and the sun will again shine through. It is your choice though if you choose to allow that sun to shine through and re-brighten your life. We challenge you folks out there to look for that sun in your lives.

Mother Earth

I don't have a chance to see Mother Earth
It's been a long time since I smelled, touched, tasted, and
heard Mother Earth
I cry when she howls for me
But I say I can't come because I'm locked up
The rain falls hard... she is sobbing and hurting
Her sun will set when I'm free again

-Maria, SEF Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: We love this piece! It is hard being locked up and not being able to go outside and experience the beauty and peace of nature. The smell of sweet lilacs and dirt, the feel of the warm sun, the taste of raindrops on your tongue, the sight of snow-capped mountains and valleys and the sound of the wind rustling the leaves and branches of the trees. These are things that you can experience when you are locked up. And these are such beautiful, simple, calming things. The great thing is that you will be out in time and will be able to go back to Mother Earth. She is always waiting for you and will welcome you back.

Man, Beat, One Mo' Night ... 'Till Court

every time i go to court
i get cold feet
sweaty palms
rapid heart beat
i can't even think
what's it gonna be
hopefully i'll get out to spend a gee
man i just wanna wear my own tennies
go home and get dummy
hop on the a.c. [bus] while i count my money
while lookin' around fo' a new honey
tomorrow's my date with judge kay
"what should i wear"
my pink and my blues wit' some county shoes
man i'm feelin' juiced
i hope i don't lose
so i could chose what i chew
man i'm gettin' the bubbies
"i know it sounds funny"
but my stomach's feelin' all funny
butterflies and thumper the bunny
i just wanna get out there and hustle some money
back to the school house to bust these knocks out
buy me a fresh 2x
bound from the house to take a walk out
even if it's pourin' out
i just wanna get the what out
well beat, fo' mo' min' — i'm out

-Jen, 150 Crew

From The Beat: On the real, we fear for you, 'cause what you plan to do will have you coming back in here way too soon. You're in the system now, and it's most unwise to continue to live how you were living 'cause you'll get caught up for some kind of mischief and be back in here. We feel your desire to be free, but we don't hear a word about accepting new responsibility to maintain that freedom you're seekin'. Walking out the door is cool, but if busting knocks is all you want to do at school — you'll be writing us from in here again soon talking 'bout how you got played for a fool. But really it will be because you didn't use this experience of incarceration as a tool to think through what all you need to do differently so you can stay free.

Reality Hit Me Hard

What's cold is that God took away three of my closest friends, leaving mothers crying.

I still remember the day when my homies called me and told me you were gone, I couldn't believe it. I just sat on the curb, sparked a blunt and prayed this was a dream.

But reality came back and hit me hard, waking me from my trance of endless thoughts, and then I realized my boy is really gone. RIP Nam Pham Davis and Minh Nguyen.

-Vietnamese, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your friends have a worthy biographer in you...this piece is a small and perfect memorial to the feeling of loss. It's cold, as you say, but you write about it with warmth and sadness. You can do more too — write about what you most miss about them, your favorite memories, your thoughts of the funeral, and also what it means to you to know that somehow you survived... and lived to tell the tale. There's a reason you are still standing. What is it?

The End of Pain

The last time I felt wanted was when my brother was hurt and I helped him and he was happy.

He had got hurt 'cause he was riding his bike and his chain broke and he flew off his bike and he had scrubbed his hands and his legs and I gave him bandages and medicine and that's all.

-Lil' Khan, 150 Crew

From The Beat: They say that there is no higher joy than the one that comes from helping another person. And in this case the person you were helping was a loved one from your own family. Thanks for sharing this moment — and this bond with your brother, and as you say in your terrific title, the way you helped to "End his pain"

Scared of a Dog

i remember when i was out
and i was in the house
and i went in the backyard
to go and get something
and it was a dog under the steps
and i didn't know that
and plus i was high
and it had broke from his chain
and got lost
and it was a purple-nose pit
and it was chasing me
and then i had ran in someone's parking lot
and they was smoking a cigarette
and i was so scared
i had told them let me hit the cigarette
and i was choking and smoking the cigarettes
and they was laughing at me

-Easy, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Thanks for the narrative poem that tells a story of when you got spooked at home. It has a funny ending too, but we're glad nothing worse happened to you. Cool poem.

A Pretty Song

You're my honey bun, sugar plum
Pumpy, umpy, umpkin
You're my sweetie pie
You're my cuppy cake gum drop
Spice-m pick-m yours
The apple of my eye
And I love you so
And I want you to know
That I'll always be right here
And I love to sing pretty songs to you
Because you are so dear

-Maria, SEF Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: Your song is so fun and very cute. We think it helps remind us that there is a fun and playful side to life. We can't live our lives without fun. We encourage everyone out there to be a kid and play. Positive and healthy fun is essential to living a happy life. We're sure we all remember the innocent fun we had watching Sesame Street and playing tag at recess. Why not watch Sesame Street again? Why not play a game of tag? What kinds of things can you do to stay a kid at heart?

"Jinia's Havin' My Baby"

man that shhh sounds crazy
you be makin' babies
daaammmnnn
yoyadadieeee
but i'm not gonna die
you like to poke fishes in the eyes
man i should be criticizin'
but i don't do backseat ridin'
so ... good bye
or should i say good night
dreamer
'cause i'm not a house wrecker

-Jen, 150 Crew

From The Beat: You handle the situation with grace and wits, 'cause that baby coming into the world doesn't need more shhh than comes with being born to teenage parents and all that biz. So major props on your decision to urge Dreamer to get a family vision, 'cause he's about to be a daddy — and every child deserves to have a loving family, which sometimes takes work. For sure, daddies need to stop playing around like jerks.

You're my cuppy cake gum drop
Spice-m pick-m yours

Smart In Both Ways

one thing people don't
know about
me is
i'm very
smart in both ways
when i say
both ways
i mean
street smarts
and
book smarts
but
i learned both
basically from the
streets
i barely went
to
school past
high school
so my book smarts
is very
basic
except for math
math is very very
important
to me because
i have used it for
my money

-Smarts, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Get that high school diploma or earn your GED (you can work on either or both while you're here), 'cause the steady money comes when it's earned legally — plus you stay free. Most have trouble with the math side of the GED test, so get in Ms. C's GED class and work on your "standard" English. And as for the street, take the best and leave the rest.

Over and Over Again

I'm not so sure when I first fell in love with you, I guess it could have been as early as that first time we held each other, or the first time I realized that you kinda liked me too.

I'm not sure, I just remember thinking of you more and more and getting less and less done in the process! I remember wanting you to stay so badly, and being so hyped at the thought I remember praying that it was you whenever the phone would ring, but at the same time hoping it wasn't, because I didn't know how in the world I was going to sound romantic and impressive when what I felt was anxious and tongue-tied.

Sometimes it still amazes me, how I get so anxious and thrilled and thoughtful about you, I guess maybe it's because I just keep falling in love with you over and over and over again.

-Xavier, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Even though this isn't written as a poem, it feels like one, because it's so romantic and heartfelt. We're sure that — next to having you with her — the letters from you are something your girl treasures. We hope you get free soon and can fall in love with each other over and over again.

What's Cold

I think the criminal justice system is cold, and racist. It's cold because it's always sending people off to live long cold lives. I think that's the coldest thing there is.

-Malcolm, Santa Cruz

From The Beat: How would you change the system so that when people moved through it they came out the other end with long warm lives, with decent lives?

Caught Up

I hate this pain.

The tears drippin' down my face
Sometimes I feel like a total disgrace.

I feel so alone

Just hopin 'and prayin'

I want to go home

When I look in my eyes I see a disguise

I'd never thought I'd be in this place.

And worst of all I'm caught up wit' a serious case.

I try to love you and love you more.

I love you and always will.

-Mike Jonez, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your faith and your hope are continually inspirational... we know you're suffering, missing your lady, worrying about your case, but your poems are so honest and so real, that they light up the darkness of your situation like starlight through a barred window. The stars are there, but they're not outside and far away in the sky. Instead, they're deep inside you, in the place where the tears and the poems come from. Hold on to them, they are what will get you through anything that happens next.

Vietnamese Angel

You shine in my life

Like a Vietnamese angel

A girl I'll be real with and never play games to

Am I wrong

'Cause I'm a sucker for love?

When I'm holding and kissing you

Your body feeling the rush

And I can't explain it

I've been through all these phases

It just amazes

On how one person can change me

So take my hand

And roll through the midnight mist

With the moon shining all bright

And the star shining all crisp

-Vietnamese, 150 Crew

From The Beat: This is a beautiful poem, full of heart and lyricism. Where did you meet this girl? How long have you been together? What's your favorite memory with her? The more details about this girl you put in the poem, the more personal it will be.

What I've Lost

I'm tired of everything I got myself into. I was first in Juvenile hall for a month in a half then I was sent to Camp Sweeney for six months. And when I got out I was put on probation. After a while I was doin' good, then all of a sudden my stupid probation officer violated me and sent me back to Juvenile Hall. So now I'm here in Juvenile Hall in this unit. I've been here for six days but I really want to go home to my family and my girlfriend because she's been with me through everything.

A week before I was released from Camp Sweeney something special came between me and her, something that would have kept us together forever. I would have been so happy but she killed it, because she wasn't ready and we both wasn't ready.

But I'm not trippin 'because when she's ready, we will do it again. But even though I feel tired of bein' here, she makes it all worth it. And I miss her and pray to God I can go home to her and I'm so happy with her.

-Kev, 150 Crew

From The Beat: We're so sorry to hear of the terrible loss you and your girl have had to face. It seems as if your love has been strong enough to get you both through it, and it also sounds as if you are ready to take that step of doing well on your next probation and focusing on what matters: Your family, your girl, your plans for the future. Be sure to support her through this - an abortion is hard on the boy but even harder on the girl, so we'll bet she really needs to know you care for her and that you're not angry with her for the decision she had to make

Feel Sad and Mad

Sometimes I feel like I just want to die

Believe it or not but it only takes just one lie

Mamaz I gave you so many chances.

Which you appreciated, but you light me up like a book of matches.

Why'd you do this to me?

Caused so much pain.

And have my eyes drop water like rain.

Mamaz I tried to catch you before you fell

And yo never listened, but are you a daughter of hell.

It's time to go so I'm a holler.

-Mike Jonez, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Out of the anger that comes with heartbreak, you give us some of your finest images so far: The book of matches, the daughter of hell. But we wonder if you don't take out all your rage about being trapped, being powerless, and put it on your girlfriend. We once asked you to write a poem written from her point of view, and you shook your head no, but isn't the greatest sign of true love when you're willing to see the world from your loved one's point of view? We challenge you once more... what do you think it is like for your girl to try to make a relationship work when her man is fighting a serious case? What is her family like? Are they supportive? What kinds of stress is SHE dealing with, at home, at school, with her friends, with her family?

Hardship

Why do I have all this pain inside?

Maybe because I keep looking back on all the things that have happened to me

and keep asking why are they are still happening.

Just because stupid shhh happens, don't dwell on it.

Let it go or talk to someone. Don't hold it in

Love and respect

- Lil' One, SEF Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: Great advice. The past is simply that - the past. It is done and over with and can have no control over us anymore. There are painful things that have happened to all of us as the years have gone by. One very important thing to do is talk and write about those painful feelings and memories that we have inside. We must let go of the past so it doesn't control us. We can't bury it inside and block it away. We must be able to face it and come to accept the things that have happened to us - both good and bad. This can be REALLY hard to do, but your advice is great - "Don't hold on to it. Let it go. Talk to someone". If we dwell on those bad things that have happened to us, they sit and rot inside of our spirits and begin to hurt us even more. So please, take Lil' One's advice and talk to a person in your life that you can trust.

To Create a New Life.

My main goal in life is to have some kids. I want to raise a beautiful family!

I know that I'm young and really can't support myself, so supporting a child would be hard, but before I die I want to leave some children in my place. Plus I'm the only person that can continue my family name. None of my uncles had boys, and I am the only one, so I got to keep it lit for the family.

I just want some children, and really a family but it's hard to trust females out here. But I plan to have at least have four children so that they can take care of each other when I'm gone. I want all my children to have the same mother so we can get married one day and raise a beautiful family and have a big house.

I also want my children to have what I didn't have when I was a child and I'm gonna be a better father than my dad was.

-Lil' Sheiking, 150 Crew

From The Beat: Your dreams for your future children are wonderful. A house, four children who can take care of each other, children with a better life than what you've had so far...this is a goal worth working towards! How will you achieve it? There are a few things you need, right? You need to make sure you live a long time, you need to get a good job that you like, so that you are in a good mood for your kids when you come home, and you need to be patient and wait until you find the right girl, someone you trust, and someone who trusts you. In the meantime, while you search for her, we hope you are practicing safe sex so you don't become a father before you're ready!

Looking Back

Looking back in the past when I was on my block smoking blunts, kickin' it with the homies up to no good, robbing people, sellin' dope — doing things I look at now and I see that the things I did was for what? Robbing for no cause, selling dope for no cause.

When I bang, it's for a cause.

-Lil' Viskus

From The Beat: All soldiers in all wars on all sides always believe they are fighting for a "cause" — but one which they have no say in creating, defining, or making. They are merely followers, the young boys sent by old politicians (among nations) or OGs (among street gangs) to follow orders, and to kill or be killed. The tragedy is not just that you have accepted your role as follower, but that you don't seem to care that the real losers in these wars are the mothers who are left behind to grieve when their sons are lost to the grave — the slow one called prison, or the quick one called the cemetery. Your mother should be your cause. What a pity that she is not.

The Price Of My Habit

The habit I have is smokin' weed. It hasn't done anything good for me. Every time I smoke, I always end up away from home. The place I go isn't fun. You get told what to do and barely see the sun.

I'm not going to lie. My habit is fun, but the price you have to pay is too much. The pain and the heartache of not seeing your family and friends is something I'm tired of feeling over and over again.

This habit I love, and I will hate to say bye, but that's what I got to do to stay outside. One love to my brother Anthony thanks for staying next to me through these rough times and supporting me when I'm inside.

-Jac

From The Beat: We always love our habits — even when they're not good for us — which is why they are so hard to break. But you've done a valuable cost-benefit analysis, and determined the cost is not worth the benefit, which tells us that there's nothing wrong with your brain at all. You've got some clean time in here, and that should make it somewhat easier out there to build on. But "somewhat easier" is not the same as easy. When you get out, all those temptations you used to give into will be there — easy access to weed, old friends who will pressure you to smoke with them, the seductive lie that you can just smoke one and stop. But every day you are able to resist makes the next day that much easier. You are regaining control of your life. Don't lose it again.

I Wanna Stop Arguing

I wanna stop arguing with my mom and my baby mama because we argue over everything. So that's why I wanna stop arguing. Like when I argue with them, I say things I don't mean. And then I hurt their feelings, and I don't like doing that. I feel bad because I did that.

But now I don't argue with my mom no more. I mean we do, but not that much. We get along now. My baby mama is coo' now, too. We don't argue a lot no more. Plus she's pregnant, so now I gotta take care of her.

-Big D

From The Beat: It's not bad to argue with those you love, as long as you keep your temper under control and respect what the other person is saying (even when you disagree with them). As to your baby's mama, the fact that you did not take precautions against the possibility of pregnancy — and then allowed yourself to get locked up, leaving her alone and pregnant — is a sign of immaturity and irresponsibility. Now that you're about to be a father, you're going to have to grow up quickly, and act like a responsible man.

Bad Habit

The main habit that I want to stop is drinking. When I drink I can't control myself. When I drink I can't stop drinking until we run out. When we run out I just go and steal some more. I end up doing something stupid like robbing someone or stealing a car or fighting someone.

When I get caught doing something stupid I end up in jail. Drinking gets me into trouble with my parents because I always say I'm going to stop drinking but I never do. I can't stop drinking. I do it even though I know I'm going to get in trouble. Drinking is my worst habit and hardest one to stop.

-Sean

From The Beat: We really give you props for admitting that you have a drinking problem, because a lot of people deny it. In fact, there's only one sentence in this brave and honest piece that we can find any fault with, and that is: "I can't stop drinking." We have far too many friends who have been alcoholics far longer than you, but who haven't touched a drop in years, to believe that. Recognizing your problem is the beginning of solving it. However, this is not a problem you can solve by yourself. You have to look for help. AA may be boring, but for most people with your problem, it is effective. But whether it is that program or another, you cannot rely on yourself to cure yourself. If you continue to drink without getting that help, your life will continue to spiral downwards until it becomes almost impossible to pull yourself out of the hole you're digging. As an alcoholic friend of ours (who has not had a drink in over seven years) says, "There's no problem in the world that alcohol can't make worse!"

The Usual Nonsense

-P-Nut

From The Beat: Of course, you didn't title your piece "The Usual Nonsense," we did. And we cut the nonsense out of it — which was every word! If you're worried about snitches, stop doing dirt. If you keep doing dirt — as your piece promised — then count on handing up your freedom to this cold-hearted system. Frankly, we would do anything in our powers to keep ourselves from being slaves. But apparently, you don't mind being one. Are you free? Hmmm. Time to put two and two together.

Messing Up

I was messing up by talking back to moms.

-Hector

From The Beat: Is this all you could find to write in nearly an hour? It doesn't sound like you take this very seriously. Talking back to your moms is only another example of that.

Back To The 'Hood

I remember looking back in the past when I was in the outs posting it in the 'hood with the homies, blowing, waiting for some one we don't like, chilling with the homies, sometimes hitting licks and doing it live every day. That's was when I was in the outs or on the run and I want to go back to the 'hood.

-Dumbo

From The Beat: It's obvious from this piece that your mother and her feelings are simply not important to you, at least not compared to your "boys." We emphasize the word "boys" because that is how you are thinking, like a boy. At some point, you will start thinking like a man, but if all you want to do is get back to the 'hood, there is a strong possibility that you won't start thinking until you're locked up for a long, long time, wishing you had matured before that happens, but being able to do nothing about it. Do you owe anything to the person who gave you life and sacrificed so much for you? Apparently not.

Dear Mom

Dear Mom, I know I did you wrong

But my past is so long

That I have so much to ask you

And ask myself what did I do wrong

I know you have been through a lot

But growing up without my father

Makes me feel all alone

And he has not been with us for so long

I have disappointed you

And now you ask yourself

"Oh God, what did I do wrong?"

-Pedro

From The Beat: When you begin to think of the pain you've caused your mom, you are moving from being a boy to being a man. All the disappointments you've caused her will disappear, and be replaced by pride, if you truly listen to God's answer to your question, and make the changes you already know you must make. Everybody makes mistakes, especially as children. We hope you show this fine poem to your mom, so that she can see her little boy is now a young man.

Freedom

Freedom is real serious to me. I think it's real shady how some people freedom get taken away 'cause of somebody else's statement. I'm in a situation like that right now. It's not cool, but I gotta accept it as part of life.

This just made me more sharper. When I get out, I know I gotta maintain ma freedom and stay out of the presence of them suckas wit' messy mouths. I care a lot about ma freedom. That's why I know how I gotta be when I'm free.

Freedom is just as serious as life. Without it, you'll be always wondering about the outside world.

-Young Scitso

From The Beat: It's not the danger of snitches you should be worrying about, but the danger of doing things that others can snitch on you for. If your freedom is as valuable to you as you say (and it is to us), then stay away from any kind of negativity that might put your freedom in jeopardy. You say you know what you have to do when you are free, but we'd like a hint of what that might be.

Use Your Mind

It's a way for you and me to get words out

Leave ya readers with a mindset of no doubt

Let reality leak on to the others, the not seeing

Make thangs go by quicker for the time being

So use what you got — ya mind — to let them know

Don't take too long because before you know it, it's time to go

-Vago

From The Beat: You definitely have skills, both as a poet and as a teacher. We can think of no more important lesson than to use that unique god-given gift: the human brain. And that last line... we couldn't have said it better.

Breaking Bad Habits

The habit that I would like to break is committing crime, because my crime life is starting to get me in too deep in the Juvenile life, and they are starting to get harder on me. I am getting to the part where I am going to try and put my past life behind me.

People make it seem like it's that easy to start a new leaf. They did it, so they expect that you can do it. Just try your hardest.

-Lil' Kabb

From The Beat: The reason the system is getting harder on you is that you are getting older. They hope that as you feel the growing pressure of punishment, you will mature out of some childish behaviors that lead you here. It is never easy turning over a new leaf. But things in life that come easily often go bad just as easily. Experience tells us that what seems hard today will make life in the future a lot easier tomorrow.

Bad Habit Needs To Be Broken

I want to change my habit on hanging on the block. Hanging on the block makes bad habit doing crime. That's the kind of habit I want to change away from me.

Smoking purple makes me think critical for a couple of days. When you smoke purple you will not think right and make you think that you will die right there.

And also I want to stay out of juvenile halls for the rest of my life when I get out and be happy forever and ever.

-CI

From The Beat: You know which habits lead you to lose your ability to think clearly, and also lead you to the hall (or worse). But it's not enough to know. We think you've known for a long time where your habits were leading, but you still could not stop. Sometimes, we have to do more than just promise ourselves to change. Sometimes we have to seek the help of others — especially others who have been through what we're going through, and have found ways to make those critical changes. Wanting to change is the necessary beginning of that change — but it's still just a beginning. Don't forget these goals you've set for yourself. The direction your life takes depends on the choices you make today!

Filling Up My Lonely Time

The times when I feel loneliness is when I'm without my family, especially when I'm locked up. But to get my mind off the sadness and madness, I work out or draw or bust flows. There's nothing better to do when you locked up. Or, I talk to my carnales and let them know what is on my mind to keep my homeboys united and not feel like I got no one on my side.

But I also got to focus on my education even while I'm in my room and take advantage of my pencil that I get.

-Gerardo

From The Beat: We see that you are good at expressing yourself with words. Maybe you should bust a flow for the next Beat issue. You know we'll publish it as long as it's appropriate. It's good that you are thinking about your education, because we believe that is the key to moving beyond where you've been and where you are. In truth, education never stops. We keep learning (if we're open to it) until we draw our last breath. The most important person to have on your side is you. Don't let yourself down.

Learning To Listen

I remember a couple of years ago. My mom kept telling me, "Don't be hanging around out on the street." But I refused to listen to her, because I was a kid and I loved hanging out on the street. Then I began to start smoking weed, and drinking. Started selling drugs, and doing other things to get money.

That's when my mom really started tripping because I started lying to her because I didn't want her hearing from the things I was doing. But I didn't realize that lying to her would hurt her also.

-Angelino

From The Beat: It's an interesting fact of life that as we mature, our parents seem to grow wiser. Of course, that's only because we begin to see things as adults, and no longer as children. The thing about lying (to your mother or anyone else) is that it signals something you are not proud of, something you know deep down inside is not right. Otherwise, why lie about it? In the end, it's that voice that becomes even more important than your mother's voice, because the voice inside will always be with you. As we grow up, we all make mistakes. Those who mature learn from those mistakes. Those who do not learn remain children forever. Congratulations on becoming a man.

Changes An' Choices

When I was younger, my life used to be hell. I went from group home to group home. I ran from all of them. But recently I ran from ROP (Right of Passage). That was a big mistake. Now I'm facing CYA (California Youth Authority).

I regret running from all those places. I can't do anything about it now except move on with my life. I made stupid choices when I was younger and I regret all of them. I'm sorry to all the people I ever hurt in the past. Sorry to the guy I robbed, but in time you'll get your money.

My mentality has changed and it's about time. Now I wanna do good. To all the young kids, think about what you do before you do it, because after you do it you can't do anything about it. Your choices now affect your life now and in the future. So do the right thing in your life, and never let anyone bring you down.

-Ismael

From The Beat: We are very impressed by what you have written here, Ismael. It's a way of saying that what you think you know today may not be what you think tomorrow. It refutes everyone who ever wrote, "I'll never change." Your regrets about hurting people in the past are a sign of healing yourself, creating for you and your loved ones a far better future. The "guy" you apologize to should get his money back, but you have already shown us something far more valuable than money — a decent respect for others, and therefore, for yourself. What has led you to start thinking like a man instead of a boy? Was it your experience in the hall, something you saw or read — or just the natural process of growing up? We would be interested in your writing on that subject, because we think you have much to teach. You are headed in the right direction. Stay positive and strong, and you will not be brought down!

What Habit Do You Want or Need to Break?

The habit I need to break is being out all night on the streets, selling drugs all day, every day, not going to school, not staying at the house with my family — just worrying about myself trying to provide for myself.

I have a big family with a single parent, so my mom be having problems taking care of all of us. That's why I do the things I do, selling drugs instead of doing it the right way by going to school and getting a job, so I don't have to watch over my back to see if the 5-0 coming or some ninjas I am funking with.

I know when I get out I am gone go legit so I can help my family more, and don't have to be locked up thinking about when I am gone get out. I can already be out doing the right thing being with my family and kicking it with my bro's. But now I know what to do when I get out. This ain't gone be not habit no more!

-Berty

From The Beat: It's clear that you know what you have to do to give your family (and yourself) what they need and deserve. But knowing what to do is not the same as doing it. That requires more than just nice words. It requires strength of character, courage to say no to old friends, and the grown-up ability to look into the future and see how what you do today affects you (and your loved ones) tomorrow. If you can follow through on the promises you make here, you will absolutely be on top of your game. Breaking these "habits" won't be easy. But not breaking them will be even harder, for you and your family.

Quit Smoking

Growing up I was a good kid. I used to do good things. I got older and all the bad things in life started to hit me. To cope with this, I took up the habit of smoking. I smoked more than a chimney. I would smoke before and after a fight; I smoked in the morning till night.

I thought I was cool until I started coughing blood. I finally noticed that me smoking would make my younger siblings and younger friends smoke. Me seeing people die from smoking helped me, and now I am trying to help everyone else.

-William

From The Beat: Not wanting your younger siblings to smoke is more than enough motivation to quit. We are glad to hear that you stopped, and now you are trying to help others. If everybody could see the actual physical damage they're doing to their young and maturing bodies (as you did when you coughed blood), maybe more young people would follow your lead. Your younger siblings and friends will always look up to you, following what they see you doing (and not what you tell them they should be doing). That goes for everything, not just smoking. If you don't want them to follow, don't do it!

Lonely

Lonely is how I feel everywhere I go. Ever since my folks passed away, it took something away from me. I think it was my tongue because I can't talk to nobody about my problems, and even when I try I just can't get the words out. Lonely is how I feel everywhere I go.

-Chris

From The Beat: We are very sorry to hear that you have lost your parents, and the effect it's had on you. In some respects, losing your parents — especially your mother — however young or old you are leaves you feeling empty and lonely. You may find yourself tongue-tied, but what you have written tells us that you still can express yourself very well. Since there are others feeling what you are feeling, we hope you continue to share on these pages. Self expression — whether oral, written, or in art — can help both you and them to cope with your loneliness.

My Life Growing Up As a Child

My life growing up as a child was pretty good. I used to go places with my dad on his motorcycle. But one day something went wrong when he came over to my house to pick me up. Him and my mom started fussing at each other about that he couldn't take me out on his motorcycle again because it was dangerous for me to be on the back while it's moving. So everything got situated out, and it wasn't a big deal. He said ok and they stopped fighting.

Then my dad took me out in the car to a nice place to have fun, which was Chuckie Cheese. That was my first time ever going to Chuckie Cheese to have fun.

-Travalin

From The Beat: Sounds like both your parents care a lot for you. Your mom worried about the dangers of riding around on the back of a motorcycle, and your made you feel better by taking you to Chuckie Cheese. Seems like you owe them more than you've given so far. Any changes in your future?

But my point is that a lot of people who are criminals or troublemakers act this way 'cause earlier on their life there was a type of event that changed their life.

Banging Brings Suffering

Gang bangers are seen as someone cool because they are hard and gangsta. But the game is filled with fake homies and haters. But that's the opposite of cool.

If you ask any OG if they could go back and not get into gangs, they would tell you they would never got associated with gangs 'cause gangbanging doesn't bring food to your table of happiness. It brings suffering and pain and ends up taking you behind bars or six feet under, makin' your family suffer because of your stupid mistakes.

-Elvis

From The Beat: How long did it take you to gain this wisdom, Elvis? How much pain and suffering have you endured (and caused) to lead you to see things so clearly, and to be so honest about that clear vision? Don't keep your experience-based knowledge to yourself. You are a teacher. Teach!

Judging Without Knowing

The way I feel about people who try to help me change and don't know nothing about my life? Well, one of the feelings I get is that they don't know what they are talking about. The reason I say that is 'cause they don't know the problems I been through or have. Another thing is that they don't know what I feel deep inside my heart. For example the people just think 'cause of the things I done that I am a bad guy.

But my point is that a lot of people who are criminals or troublemakers act this way 'cause earlier on their life there was a type of event that changed their life. In other words they had family problems or they lost somebody they loved.

-Jose

From The Beat: We think you are right, Jose, people don't know what you've been through or what you're feeling deep down. But they may still be very sincere in wanting you to change in order to avoid bad consequences. We want you to apply your analysis to those people that "don't know what they are talking about," and realize that you are judging them (as they judge you) without knowing the problems they have had in their lives, or what they are feeling deep in their hearts. In other words, whether they are judging you or you are judging them, many assumptions get made that may or may not be true.

What I've Took For Granted

I took my freedom for granted
I thought nothing was going to happen
I thought I was going to have my freedom forever
But I kept getting caught in these sticky situations
And finally a court day came up
And a couple probation violations got presented
And then all of a sudden shhh hit the fan
And I lost my freedom

-Peter

From The Beat: Now that you've experienced what happens when you don't treasure your freedom, what changes do you foresee in your future? What will you do — or not do — to change this picture?

My Ways

We do it everywhere we go
At all times and at all places
We can't stop... this life

Don't even ask me why
But I'm going to tell you one thing
We ain't no lie

We will always be here
And we always stick together
We are all brothers,
I love all of you homies.

-Lalo

From The Beat: We are really tired of seeing that silly old phrase, "can't stop...." It's silly because you can stop and it's silly because you can be stopped. Why not open your eyes and stop yourself before you get to that point.

Love Was There

Love was in the air but now it's gone
Another man showed up and now I'm on my own
I was left heart broken and she didn't even care
And then thought the world was unfair
I then knew that love was rare and was not always true
She had me thinking that love is only for a special few
Only if she knew
I hope the next man put her through what I went through
So she can feel the pain
But the love I have, would still remain the same
The new man she found would not be the one I blame
I would blame her, she was the one who shattered my heart
I gave it to her whole, and got it back torn apart,
But now I know how girls are,
Don't love no girls except for family 'cause you won't get far.

-White

From The Beat: We feel your pain — or, at least, most of us have felt what you're feeling of having a broken heart. But do you think you are being completely fair to her? After all, your priorities at the time you did whatever got you here didn't have her at the top, or you wouldn't be here. Maybe she felt you left her first.

Not Coo'

Being in dese halls ain't coo' at all
I'd rather be at home back to wearing my own drawe's
Da food is cold da clothes is musty
I miss being wit' ma cousins and drinkin' wit ma aunty
I miss goin' to an actual school
I'd still be out and free if I hadn't acted a foo'

-Babee

From The Beat: "Acting the fool" is a choice. You didn't think you were being a fool until you had to face the consequences. So, the simple moral of the story is, if you go back out there to drink with your cousins and aunty, very soon you'll again be acting the fool. And we both know where that leads.

Do You Believe In Love At First Sight?

I fell in love at first sight
It was real pleasant
But didn't seem right
We did a lot of things together
Made love in all types of weather
It was a real special thing
I felt like a king
And treated her as my queen
And the love I had for her had me willing to do anything
Everything was moving fast
My body got excited
Every time I glanced at her stance
She had a beautiful face
I thought that not girl would ever take her place
I really thought it was gonna last
But she cheated on my ass
I was hurt
But then I found out that love at first sight ain't gone work
Well at least for me.

-Nell

From The Beat: Maybe it never was love at all, just a strong physical attraction that is often confused with love. Real love is a process of growth, compromise, and patience during turbulent times.

Listen

I'm living my life
The devil is trying to take my soul
I'm moving too fast
I'm speeding out of control
I know I'm gonna die slow
Y por la feria vivo mi serias
Prefiero morirme que vivir
En mi rodias en esta tierra...
(And for the money, I live seriously
I prefer to die than to
Live on my knees on this Earth)....

-Shy Girl, San Mateo

From The Beat: You might think this sounds hardcore on paper, but if you analyze what you wrote, it's sad. One's life is the most valuable thing a person can have. Some of the bravest people who have ever lived are six feet under the ground and we bet if they could say something to you, they'd say, "I wish I would have not been the person that I was because once you're gone, you're gone." What good does being brave serve when you're forgotten?

On Becoming A Coach

I have always wanted to learn about being a football coach or being a basketball coach. I have always wanted to learn about being a mechanic and learn about cars. I have always wanted to learn about these things. I'm going to go to school so I could learn about these things I want to be.

-Anonymous

From The Beat: The only thing we wish you would change is to put your name to what you wrote!

I Say...

I say you could be whatever you want to be, that's if you don't blow it. I know I could be what I want to be. But I started kicking it in the wrong neighborhood. But that does not mean that I could not be what I want to be. I still have a chance to be what I want to be.

-Jetas

From The Beat: You have more than a chance, Jetas. You have a responsibility to be what you want to be. Do you know what you want to be? If so, learn what you need to do to achieve it, then get it.

Keep It In Mind

I love my life, and hope I'll never change
And all the trouble I've caused I'm the one I blame
Fame I could have had and still can
But as the young man that I am

I chose the streets

Rather beef an' be cool
Then use my talents and go to school
Doin' what I do

Ridin' with a Taliban crew

Stayin' true, in and out of jail

Taking lives on my way to hell

In juvenile hall so I can't make bail

So I must ride out whatever time I get

Get released back to the streets to watch my money flip

I hate seeing beautiful black women on the strip

But it ain't gone change

Actually it just might

But locking us up ain't makin' it right

To some people it's a great idea

Takin' our money and building new Ikeas

And new Juvenile Halls

While our parents work hard and can't even ball

They ain't did nothing wrong but it s the law

That they must pay

Every day we stay

Staff say they're here to make a difference.

Some really do care

But some sit on they ass

Talk shhh and get easy cash

But I'll be here for the money, too

Seeing the same-ass dummies walk through

But this time I will change

But for me and not for you

-Young Nell

From The Beat: The hopeful conclusion is what makes this piece! Until then, it is a cleverly-written description of what you can't change — the system! But you can change yourself and your relationship to the system, which is why we applaud your commitment to doing just that. And your reasons for doing it are the best there are. Indeed, for yourself, and not for "us" or "them" or anyone else. Success is the best revenge. There can be no success, however, if you think you can go back to the streets to watch your money grow. You'll grow money all right, but it won't be going into your pockets...

Becoming A Great Teacher

I have always wanted to learn about what it is to be a great teacher, to teach all da youngsters, not to step in da wrong path. I want to be a good role model 'cause I know dat all dose youngster if dey don't have a role model like me dey all just gonna end up here. I just know.

'Specially to all my lil' folk in East Palo Alto, I want to be dere whenever I get out. I'ma be dere for you guys, not to let you guys down. And for my lil' brother Tonito, he would not definitely be here 'cause I'ma make sure he don't step in my shoes.

When somebody steps in da system here at Juvenile Hall, da system won't let dem get out 'cause of da S-T-U-P-I-D Drugs an' da bad influence and da violence dat dey see. But it's all coo dat' when I come in to make sure I put a stop.

-Droopy

From The Beat: If you can put a stop to your own participation in the "stupid drugs" and the "bad influence" and the "violence" in the streets, then you will on your way to becoming your own great teacher. What do you plan to do to put a stop to your own juvenile hall career, and become that role model your little brother needs?

What I Took For Granted

I remember what my mom had to say
To stay off the street and to stay away
I kept comin' back until today
I've been gone from home for 30 days

I'm wondering why I didn't listen

But instead now I'm wishin',

That I be home for Christmas and continue livin',

I'm still waiting on my release

I pray to the Lord He give me peace

For when I get out I don't hit the streets

-Antonio

From The Beat: You're feeling the pain of separation from loved ones, and praying you can stay off the streets so it won't happen again. That's good. But in the end, you will be tested, and it will be a measure of how much courage and strength you have inside whether you give in to the desire to hit the street, or stay home.

Why You Guys Be Changing our Stuff

Why you guys don't put our slang words in The Beat Within?

Why you guys are negative in our things that we write?

Why you guys be changing my words in every single Beat that I write for you?

Why you guys have to kill my parts all the time I be writing in Spanish/English you guys mess up my poems all the time. There you go a couple examples:

Fo/Foo', waz up/what's up, chu/you, thizz/this.

I have a couple of more but I can't put them in because I don't have time today. This vato is out and this is my last Beat Within.

-Lil' Vato

From The Beat: Sorry you feel that way. Most of the changes we make are for reasons we think are good ones. For example, when you wrote "Thizz vato is out," we changed it to "this" because "thizz" and "this" are two different words with two different meanings, and you chose the wrong one for the meaning you intended. Other times, we suspect you're trying to convey more than just what the word means by how you spell it, and we don't like The Beat to be used by rival gangs. Of course, sometimes we change things that probably should not be changed, and for that we apologize. But finally, we are guests in a system, just like you are (although we have one great advantage — we get to leave), and we have rules to follow, too. Any time you want to submit a piece in these pages, they are always open to you.

Stressed Out, Smoked Out, 'Shroomed Out And Thizzed Out

I get stressed out a lot. Not easily, but as my stress builds up, as in any other person, I just end up smoking some grapes with grape swishers. And to tell you the truth, I gotten stressed every day, so I smoked every day. And if I'm extra stressed, then I 'shroom. A lot of times I pop pills and drink 40 .oz Mickey's or "211" Steel Reserve.

But my point is, it's all bad. I used to do that stuff every day. I wasted my money, my time, and my future plans. At least for the moment, since I'm here at Hillcrest, I could have this chance to change myself. To turn myself into a real man I could be.

-Craze

From The Beat: Of course, we like the last paragraph the best because it shows us that you have matured enough to see that you have things to accomplish on the road to becoming "a real man." The problem with taking addictive substances as a remedy for stress is that your body begins to manufacture stress in order to get the "medicine" it's grown addicted to. It becomes a downward whirlpool. So take this chance to change seriously.

I'm going to go to
 school so I could learn
 about these things I
 want to be.

Dreaming

Last night I had a dream about my ex-girl. I lost her por que soy un desmadroso ('cause I am a destroyer) that doesn't give a shhh about anything. Being locked up makes you think about all the bad things that you have done, but once you're out you forget all that shhh and you start to do the same stuff, and the people that were waiting for you te dan la espalda (they turn their back) and you feel bad and alone so you get worse.

-Mondragon

From The Beat: It sounds like a circle you need to get off. What would it take to keep thinking when you're on the outs, because when you commit the crimes that send you here, you really aren't thinking. If you "feel bad and alone" at the end, it's time to find different friends and different pleasures.

The Drug Alcohol

I started drinking a lot my freshmen year because there was no weed to smoke at some party I was at, and there was a lot of drink. So I started drinking and I like the effect of drinking more than smoking because I was more active.

-Elmo

From The Beat: Have you looked at ALL the effects of drinking? We don't think you like the effect of liver damage, or the loss of brain cells, or blackouts. No one who has those effects ever thinks about them, until the damage has been done.

Ghetto Livin'

Where we come from we had to earn our respect. We grew up with our mother's struggling to get us through life. In our living room we had couches all ripped up because we didn't have the money to live like we wanted to. One room apartment for 12 people. We struggle to get through our childhood. Not a lot of people live that way.

The apartments we live in are broken down, that they paint once a year. The only paintings they get every day is the taggings from all the 'hoods around. A lot of people still don't have respect for us. That's hwy we get violent and we find any reason to hate each other. Others turn to get away from these problems by drinking our 40s or smoking blunts.

In this ghetto lifestyle, we looking for the same thing, respect!

-Nacho

From The Beat: It's all a matter of definition, isn't it, Nacho? For example, do you respect a man who turns away from a fight? We do. Do you respect young men who get drunk and then get violent? We don't. What is respect and how long does it take a person to earn it? Is respect the same as fear? Do you fear the cop who can take you to jail?

Being a pacifist, I don't believe I should do this, not only because of my belief, but also because it'll just give me another charge.

Thoughts On Revenge

Being locked up makes you think, since there's obviously nothing else to do. What I've been thinking about recently is who put me in here — my best friend! I've known him for over two years, and just recently he starts to show symptoms of wanting me out of the picture, out of his life for as long as possible.

He took my writing and tipped it to the police, essentially making me a felon. Not only that, but also having the nerve to start bragging about it all to my friends, and his friends. I've talked about it with other people that are locked up with me, and each one of them gives me the exact same response, which turns out to be violence.

Being a pacifist, I don't believe I should do this, not only because of my belief, but also because it'll just give me another charge. But I've been planning how to get back. If he turns me in for my slightly suggestive writing, I'm just going to get back by turning him in for movie pirating. I'm not big on revenge, but this is something too big to ignore. Not only do the other wards agree, but my mother agrees as well. And I hope The Beat will agree with me as well

-Aidenn

From The Beat: Did "he" make you into a felon, or did you make the choices to do what the law describes as a felony? Don't you think it's strange to be asking advice for what to do from people whose choices have led them here, often multiple times? Why would they have useful advice for you? They don't even have very useful advice for themselves — if freedom is an important quality to seek. As a pacifist (which means, as a thinker), you are your own best advisor in this regard. As for your plan to get even, it is 100% better than violence. Still, we hope you weigh the possible consequences of responding in any way at all, only promising a continuation of tit-for-tat. As to your "felony," surely it didn't come from "slightly suggestive writing." To punish you for writing would violate the Constitution's protection of free speech. We have the feeling that there is some deed or deeds behind those "slightly suggestive" words...

You Blew It

Something I really took for granted was my freedom. Ever since I entered middle school I always felt free and thought I'd be free forever. I used to get in fights in middle school and even stole food or candy to eat. I thought to myself that it was okay to do these things just because I wasn't getting caught.

My high school year is when I started slippin' and gettin' caught. I got into a rumble. I was backin' up homies, but at the end I got wrapped. I was detained for a couple of, and when I got out I was on lockdown. I was getting urine tested every week. My room was getting searched every week, and I was put on non-affiliation with my own cousins.

It's like once you get in the system, they make it so you're back right in. Then they send a bill to your parents. Anyways this system takes all your freedom. But once I hit 18, I'm sealin' my record and I'm goin' straight. I'm 17 years old and no job accepted me. Imagine bein' 18 years old with a strike. That ain't the bidness for me...

-Lecca Loto

From The Beat: Don't wait until your 18 to "go straight," whatever that term means to you. You may not be able to seal your record until you're 18, but changing your thinking and looking to start down a new path doesn't have to wait. Changing is not just something you will for yourself to happen. It is a process. And the sooner you begin that process, the further along you'll be. Go for it!

I Blew It

I'm writing about how I blew it. I think I took my freedom for granted because while I was smoking trees. I knew I would get booked, but it didn't matter to me, because I thought I would get away wit' it. I guess I was wrong. Now look at me I'm booked thinking, "Damn! I knew I should have stopped."

Every time I get a dirty pee test I told myself I was gonna stop but never did, and when I got my last dirty test I really did decide to stop and was going through with it. But it was already too late and my PO came to book me. Now that I'm in here, I have devoted myself to when I get out I would never smoke again.

Now all I'm doing is waiting for my time to be over so I can get out and prove to my PO, my family and mainly to myself that I can't stop by myself with no help from anyone because no matter what, if I put my to it, I can get it done and that's what I plan to do when I get out. I stay clean and make something of myself so I can be proud of myself for what I have accomplished.

-The Boss

From The Beat: You can already be proud of yourself for committing to a clean and sober —and therefore different — future. But we want to encourage you, as strongly as we can, not to test yourself by going it alone. You prove nothing by doing that. And, in fact, it may prove that you have even more personal courage if you reach out to others who have lots of experience. We're not saying that you can't do it on your own, we're only saying that puts an even greater burden on you if you should fall. NA and AA are models that work far more often than the "I did it myself" strategy. If they are offered at Hillcrest, then don't just wait for your "time to be over," get a head start on building a clean and sober foundation. In any case, we hope you follow through on your promise so you can truly become "The Boss." Good luck.

Damn! You Blew It

Damn, you blew it. I know you didn't like ROP, but you messed up this time. Damn, you only had one more year to go. I know it sound like a lot, but look at it like this. Ok, look, you had one year left and now that you ran away, now you are looking at two years, the minimum, and eight years, the maximum. Boy you screwed up now.

But damn, two to eight years in YA, but you act like it is just a few months. But damn, bro, it ain't just a few months. It is two to eight years of your life locked up. Damn bro, if you are lucky you might come out when you are seventeen and damn if you are not... you will get that when you are twenty-three. Damn bro, that's a big thing even if you say it's nothing. But all I can say to you is to stay up bro, and I know you don't like to hear me say though, damn bro, you blew it.

-Raul

From The Beat: Finally, someone sees that getting locked up for two years of your life (and possibly much more) is not "nothing." It's something. If you can learn from your friend's screw up, then you won't have to go through what he is going through — which includes family and friends like you, as well as himself, telling him he blew it!

Why

Why she turned around and left without a goodbye, without a reason? I'm right here waiting for some note to tell me why. Why she had left. Here in my cell thinking of her how she broke my heart, thinking how she just couldn't wait for me, thinking that I had to forget about her.

-Demonio

From The Beat: We don't know why she wouldn't wait for you to get out, but maybe you can put yourself in her mind for a minute. Maybe she thought, "That Vato didn't care enough about me to want to stay with me... He loved his boys more than he loved me, and so let him be with his boys..." Is that possible?

My Boo

I love him and he loves me. Me too. We've been through a lot together. We even been to jail. Hell and back together. Not that it's cute, it's just we make mistakes. Everybody do!

You should never judge a book by its cover. I don't care what nobody say, he still ma lover. I can't wait till we meet again. Even before the love started, we was best friends. Sometimes I wish we could be together, so I pray to God.

-LaDonna

From The Beat: We don't know if this relationship could be a good one or not. We know the boy you love, and where he is right now and what he writes about his future makes us worry that your attention is misplaced, and likely not to do you a bit of good. But whether we're right about that or not, we know that right now your focus should be on you, and making you the strongest, healthiest person you can be. Until you become that, it won't matter how good he is. The program you are in is about you, and how to make better choices for yourself. It's about chemical dependency and triggers that put you back at the starting gate. When you pray to God, we hope you know what to pray for, because we have no doubt that God is also praying to you. Are you listening to Him?

My Dog

I used too have a blue nose pit. He was three weeks old. He was so cute and small. He went everywhere with me. He was a little sick one. Everybody was on my pit. They said he was sick, too.

I miss that little ninja so much. Too bad I had to sell him. Moms was on my line. he was getting' too big. But it's good. I'm 'bout to get a Rott, though.

-Lil' K

From The Beat: If your mom was on your case because the pit was getting too big, what do you think will happen if you get a Rottweiler? According to the dog books, the pit weighs between 30 and 85 pounds, depending on the sex, but the Rottweiler weighs between 85 to 130 pounds! Seems like you're going in the wrong direction!

Hurt

Actually, let's turn that person because I am that person (I find hardest to please). My mother did some shady-ass shhhh to me. I don't rally know what to say about her, but she has been in and out of my life. After two years, she want to come back. I said no because I don't think that she deserve to. She can ask for shhhh, but she can't give shhhh. All I asked from her is to try harder, but yeah, I have some time to think about what I want to do about that woman. That's the end of that woman.

-Peaches and Cream

From The Beat: We can't tell you what you should do in relation to your mom. But we want you to think about what she might have gone through as a child herself, and how that might have affected her relationship with you. You might find that a little forgiveness on your part would not only bring her a measure of peace, but it also might help you to move forward. In the end, though, it's your life and your mother, so you have to do what you have to do.

Him

He was locked up with me. Loud but quiet and shy to me. Finally, he opened up. As he did, the time was passing by. I came to tears and wanted to cry. We exchanged numbers without staff knowing and I sent him little notes just to tell him to be good and be strong, because he knows right from wrong.

We couldn't really talk, but I kinda got to know from other people who he was and yada yada. I remember sittin' at the table. Staff would say, "No cross table talking." His friend would mouth, "Go with him. He like you." I'd shake my head no, because I was scared and still am, because bad pasts really trigger me being in a relationship with someone.

I think about him even now, and I miss seeing him during program, breakfast, lunch and dinner. But when I see him again, I'll be happy, that's for sure. Hopefully, he'll get released soon, and be shinin' bright like the beautiful moon. I miss him while I'm stuck at Walden House.

-CeCe

From The Beat: As long as you think of yourself as "stuck at Walden House" you'll continue to be stuck on a boy you don't really know (except as you've created him in your mind). If you know that previous bad relationships have been a trigger to using, then ignoring that trigger is a prescription for using again. What this piece tells us, CeCe, is that there is still much about this program that hasn't penetrated your soul. All we can say is that you are more important than any man alive and that your entire focus, for the moment, should be on you and those you truly love and who truly love you. This boy may or may not become one of those true loved ones, but if he is to be, then he, too, would urge you to put your efforts on your own rehabilitation, and let that develop before any other relationships threaten it. If he can't see that, then he isn't good for you. If you can't see that, then you're not doing yourself much good either. For relationships to work, both parties must be strong, independent people who value themselves first and foremost. Keep working on being that person.

They Don't Know This About Me

It ain't one, it's one thousand things. But since I am that writer, I will participate.

I bet y'all don't know how amazingly smart I am. I just write like dis in The Beat. If I told y'all one thing you don't know, then yo would know too much...

One thing is I got five tattoos. Dang, man, and one is misspelled.

-Crackhead

From The Beat: We are only impressed with how amazingly smart you are if you're able to use those smarts for the good of you and the good of those you love. We know people on death row who test as geniuses, but they still aren't "amazingly smart" because look where they are. A word to the wise...

That Person

That person is a person who told me what I needed to do

That person is the person who helped me through

That person is the person I drive insane when I was smokin' weed

So I ran away just to dance to the beat

That person is my ex-boyfriend

-Oriana

From The Beat: We wish you had written more than this, Oriana. Think of what you'd like to teach in what you write, and use this opportunity to teach it. You've learned a few things about yourself and the world, we hope, so we'd like to benefit from what you've learned.

RIP Angel

So, here I am in rehab. Trying to recover from crystal meth! When I left, I left something that was very, very special tome. That something was my seven-month blue nose pit, Angel. She is all gray, with four big white patches. The tip of her paws are white, and the tip of her tail is also white, with brown freckle-looking spots.

Her eyes are blue, and when she walks, it is so graceful and peaceful. When she sleeps, it's like a baby who is sound asleep. When she plays, it's so exciting.

Then, on Christmas Eve night, when she went out to go the bathroom, she decided to take a dip in the pool. When my mom went out to get her, she was nowhere to be found. They were looking for her, and about five minutes later they walked by the pool and saw her at the bottom!

It was a tragic moment for everyone. So my step dad took her out and tried to save her, but it was too late. He thinks Angel died and suffered from hyperthermia because the water was very cold.

I miss her with all my heart.

-Donkey

From The Beat: This well-written piece touches our hearts. We also have dogs that we love, that are a part of our family. Even when we consider them dying of natural causes, it makes us sad. When one goes this way, it makes us want to protect them like little children need protecting. You will always remember Angel, but you will also be able to build a new loving relationship with another puppy — just as soon as you graduate from rehab and are able to be responsible for another life, even a dog's life. Thank you for this.

I was scared and still am,
because bad pasts really
trigger me being in a
relationship with someone.

My Dad Wanted A Little Girl

My dad is a person I always had to please. I was always a tomboy, and he wanted a little girl. But I was never that.

-Marie

From The Beat: We think your dad should have appreciated you for who you are, and not who he wanted you to be. Just be yourself!

Trying To Impress That One Person

I been trying to impress this person all my life. I do things that I hate, go out of my way. It's the reason I am the way I am... my father.

-Crackhead Is Hurt

From The Beat: This is the second piece that just gives us the surface of your relationship with your dad. Can you get under the surface, and explain how trying to please him has made you the way you are? Are you still trying to please him, or have you realized that by doing so, you are cheating yourself?

A Dog Story

Man, I eat dog, point blank! You can breed them, or you can make them fighting dogs, but otha than that, I hate animals. They're great for eating, but some people are extreme with it and use them for love.

Sometimes animals have no purpose. What a waste of space. Dog can be a delicacy in poor countries. Some people even pay for dogs. There are all types of things to do with dogs. Hit them!

-Crackhead

From The Beat: Sometimes we think you are trying too hard to be shocking and entertaining instead of enlightening. For example, if you really eat dog, can you tell us if this is a cultural thing? How do you cook them? Any particular color of dog that tastes better than another? Can you imagine why eating dogs in one culture might be acceptable, but not in another? In India, for example, it would offend Hindus if you ate hamburger, since cows are sacred. How do you think culture affects our tastes? Come on, Crackhead, you can educate as well as obfuscate. (Look it up!)

Disappointed

I'm disappointed because I got caught and after I got caught it made me think of lots of things I did wrong on the outside.

I also disappointed my parents because I was driving in a stolen car. When I first went to court I felt like the bad one. I felt really bad because it made me think about when I was free. It also makes me think of my family when I'm here.

-Young and disappointed

From The Beat: Funny how when you have time to reflect, you have to wonder what the hell you're doing out there. Problem is, most of you just go straight back to doing the same old thing. Obviously, getting locked up isn't always enough a deterrent. What would it take for you to stop screwing up? Someone dying? Getting locked up years? What would it take for you?

Things They Don't Know

Things people don't know about me is don't judge me by what I look and act like because some people try to test me to the wrong level and I don't like to be messed with by people I don't know. 'Cause for some reason I try to hurt them seriously bad or I fight them for a long time.

Now days I want people to see that I don't play from the outside but I don't wanna use violence. Every time I want people to know me as "that homeboy who don't play" around with suckas who think they harder than me just because they might be bigger or stronger. I want them to see how a real homeboy gets down but I'm getting tired of fighting. Sometimes I feel like people who play with me the wrong way should die.

-Jacob

From The Beat: That's hood sickness, or something that needs to be addressed, when you think someone who bothers you deserves to lose their life. Even if you don't yourself want to kill the person, just wishing for that person's life to end is a way of keeping yourself sick in the hood, heart and head. Get help! Talk to an elder whom you trust, before this type of thinking hurts you further.

In These Beat Pages

This Lil' Mousie from Livermore once again up in these Beat pages! I just got a group home interview like a week ago! From Southern California! Damn! They are trying to send this vato down to Southern California! But I refused it! Because it's a set up (from the system) also it's a set up! So I'm just waiting to get another interview! Much love and respect to all. Much love to all the fallen soldiers.

-Lil' Mousie

From The Beat: Have you been set up by the system before? How did you know it was a set up? Has the system taught you how to read the system - but not to read? We hope you get out of the system soon and can focus on real life learning, but it will be very hard as long as you stay tied to the gang life, a life full of paranoia, stress and sadness.

Charged As an Adult

I'm hella mad, because my new year started out bad — because I went to court and found out that I'm getting charged as an adult.

But I ain't even trippin'! Forget it! I'm gonna do my time and get out like this, so I can be wit' my family and we all gon' be on like what!

-Ray-Ray

From The Beat: What's saddest about the current state of affairs is that you clearly still have kid's mentality or you'd be more ready to face reality whether it has you tripping or not. And yet, that juvenile mental set is exactly what gets you charged as an adult. We see that you're not ready to take responsibility for yourself, which does harm to you, your family and everyone else in the causal chain of effects emanating from the society's plus your own self — neglect. Sorry to see you in this situation, but if tripping helps you see the serious nature of what your facing, let the pain in so you can begin to change the path you're making.

Finally Out This Thang

Man, what's up Beat? This yo' boy Lil' Glen finally about to get out this thang. Feel me? P-O Talked to me today, told me I'm going to a group home later this week. You all already know I've been doing hard time holding it down though, so I ain't trippin'. But I'm go pimp this thang so I'm go cut the rose and put this thang to a close. All you boys stay in the house.

-Lil' Glen

From The Beat: Nice words of advice Lil' Glen. We'll miss you, but glad you're moving to greener pastures.

Why I Do What I do...

Really and truly I do what I do nowadays to get and have what I want. I'm in need of a lot of money and I need to get it the fastest way I can that's why I do what I do and when I need something I don't have to ask nobody for nothing, but the problem with that situation is that everybody that knows what I do wants something for free or they be hating on me and all my shit.

That's why I keep all my shhh to myself and stack hella money.

-Baby T

From The Beat: What's the point of having anything if you can't share it. Maybe if you got your money slower and safer, folks wouldn't be watching you and trying to get what you got. But who the hell wants what you have? You have nothing as you sit in someone else's clothes in juvenile hall wishing on freedom. Just keeping it real!

Unfaithful

Man, I'm sick of going out with hella females. Every time I talk on the phone with one and when I get into a good conversation with one female, another female calls and gets mad when I tell them I'm going to call them back.

-Dmarcus

From The Beat: It's hard to juggle a lot of different relationships, or friendships. Are you just saying that and never call that person back? If so, then that's probably why they feel that way. If not, then maybe that's their issue, but try and see what part you play in that situation. You can also work on being faithful to one and only one special female.

My Life

... aka Lil' Creeper from the East Bay. Well, I'm here in max now, but you know how that goes. That's the life we chose. But me, I'm good. Doing my time like a G. But to let you know just a lil' about my life ... (to be continued).

-Lil' Creeper

From The Beat: Right when you got past all the set phrases to tell us a little about you, you're through. We sure do hope this is "to be continued."

Still In Here

Saludos, Beat Within! How you doin'? Me still in this 150 Juvenile Hall in maximum security. But I'm ridin' my time, 'cause we stay alive for the game.

But you need to have a very smart mind, 'cause we could start over fresh this year. You feel me? But it's the same since I came in, and freak it!

-Lil' Creeper

From The Beat: If you're not changin' your mind about what you're living for, then you're not using your time but your time is using you — 'cause you'll be coming back into the lock up system with more time to do. What do you think they expect when they stack one criminal by the next? And you're still banging without a second guess at how life might be like out of all this mess.

My Dog Story

My bad and funny dog story was when I was like eight-years old. My full grown pit bull dragged me down the street. My dad and mom were laughing when it happened. My dad came and grabbed the leash from me.

-John

From The Beat: Luckily all your dog did was drag you down the street. Things could have been worse. What did you think about your parents laughing at you? Did you feel different about your dog after that incident?

I Will Want To Be...

What's up Beat, I will want to be a millionaire when I turn twenty and go to college and go study chemistry and botany and being street smart to chemistry and school smart to botany can make me a millionaire .

I come to The Beat tonight to say that just because I sell drugs don't mean I won't go far in my life.

-Dargus

From The Beat: We get your point but we also encourage you to get some realistic expectations. There aren't too many millionaire twenty-year-olds. Or millionaire botanists for that matter. But we like how ambitious you are. So keep striving, but first set some realistic goals.

Have You Ever

Have you ever sat in your crew and reminisced on all the sins you have made? Or the people you have affected? Do you ever felt guilty?! Some act like you a wit, trippin'! But inside you're hurt. You know the truth.

-Lil' Mousie

From The Beat: Have you!? Answer your own questions, and The Beat will print your answers.

That Person

I'm sometimes close with God. I don't think it's hard to please Him. Well I know it isn't, but the way I think about it, it is sort of hard to please Him because I would have to change my life and that's the hard part. Not that I don't wanna do it because I do but being in the environment I'm in, it's hard to change. It's no problem praying and believing in God, the only hard part is what He wants you to do. I mean if I could change I would. I pray every night to change but to be truthful me bein' me, I don't think I can change.

I'm in the game and stuck. I got stuck in this game. It all started the first time I sold dope. After that I start robbing people to get my dope money. Then when I got on my feet I started getting money money. I got a name. Everyone respected me lookin' up to me so I kept doin' it and now I can't stop. Now I'm almost 16 years old still searching for answers 'cause jail ain't it.

-Lil' DJ

From The Beat: If they respect you for dealing, they'll respect you for stopping — if their respect is worth anything. You have the power of a leader, so maybe if you can stop some of the people who look up to you will choose a safer path too?

Dog Story

My auntie had a dog that she really loved. Her name was Mimi. Mimi was my auntie's best friend. One day my auntie was sleeping and her husband, my uncle, opened the garage (where the dog slept). Mimi woke up and ran into the street and she got run over by a car.

-Tram

From The Beat: Dogs are a big responsibility, kind of like kids. You even have to watch them almost as close as you might watch your kids. But we hope Mimi has a new dog to be her best friend, and we hope you have a new dog in your life too!

Couldn't Please My Auntie

My auntie was a person that was hard to please. She always wanted me to be a square-ass ninja, but that just ain't me.

So she would always get mad and do hell a trash! That's why I cut on her ass, so I could live on my own.

-Ray-Ray

From The Beat: We don't know what she did, so we can't say if she was over-reacting or if you were, but we can say that your experiment in living on your own has you calling juvenile hall's max unit your home — and that is just plain wrong! So unless "freedom just ain't me", you need to think through who you really want to be and how you choose to think, act and see.

Free, Free Forever

man i want to be free
can you let me go free
i feel like a bear

that had been locked up for a year
man right now let me be free
see mah people and homies
free, free forever

-Snow Bunny Melody

From The Beat: Now take your thought and push it forward to plan how you can stay free after your release — 'cause that will decide whether after you go free, you go free forever!

Introducing Donté

My name is Donté, and I like to play basketball, and I love the game! I love to have fun with my family and with my girl.

I like to work hard at what I do in my life. I do not like being locked up, and I hope I get out fast. When I get out, I want to get my life back in shape.

-Donté

From The Beat: What game do you love? Basketball or the street game? If it's the latter, then that's exactly what you need to change in order to get your life back in shape. Working hard on the street grind will have you doing more and more time. So before you get out, stop and think about.

Interview with Lil' Man-Man

How did it get to this point?

Because nobody never did stuff for me when I was getting older, so I started doing what I had to do to get money and stuff "the easy way".

What do you miss most?

I miss my family and my girlfriend and my freedom ... and the way a female feel.

What have you lost?

I have lost my freedom and my soul, because my life is over and I'm about to go to Rita and start my time.

What have you gained?

I have gained a lot of respect from a lot of people on the street, and my family, and my girlfriend.

When I get out ...

I'm going to move on and go legit and get the money the right way and not the easy way.

-Lil' Man-Man

From The Beat: Props on your decision to change how you make your money on the outs, 'cause that's the only way you'll stay on the outs for long, with your family and your girlfriend. It may be that little youngsters growing up with nothing naturally turn to the streets to get something — 'cause there aren't too many jobs for youngsters out there. However, by the time your old enough to catch adult time, you're past old enough to change your life and make up your mind to make your money away from the street grind. With patience and determination, you find and keep a job. Then, as you build your job history, you'll find more interesting and better paying jobs ready to hire you, too.

Free My Black People

Free my black people! Because they is locking all the blacks up for some stupid stuff that we did not do, or something that someone blamed on us, or some stupid stuff! Or like when the cops tell another that they' friend is telling on them — so they kill each other!

-Big Lp

From The Beat: Really the only ones who can stop the killing your talking about is you yourselves. The same with staying out of trouble so the cops can't touch you — it's on you to beat them at their own game. Quit the mob and get a job!

A Dog and a Cat

There was this one day: it was a sunny morning. I lived in Stockton, and we were all asleep. We had a cat named Colorful because she was mixed with all different colors, and she had two little kittens.

So that sunny morning when we were all asleep in the house, this big black dog hopped over our fence, and our cat fought the dog! Believe it or not, our cat turned out to be the winner — with a lot of scratches!

And after that day, that dog never messed with our cats again.

-Anthony

From The Beat: Chalk one up for Colorful, the mama cat! Those were two lucky kittens to have such a powerful and courageous mama cat! And they've enjoyed a peaceful backyard ever since. Thanks for the story; we'll remember it next time we hear someone barking like a big dog!

Last of the Bossalini's

yeah i'm the last
i'm gumbalassi the most
bossalini from the bay
off the california coast
i'm addictive

so come and take your dose
yo' girl jockin' my
giant's camp and girbaud's
who would of known

that i'd be the last
gumbalassi-bossalini
boy i gets my cash
i hits corners

i'm breaking off from the task
hop out of the car
and i leap in tall grass
i smoke purple

and i play no games

don't mess with snitches

so i say no names

i gotta grip stacks

and throw away chump change

kinda like fat joe

girl i make it rain

just spittin' heat

straight out the west bay

-Lil' Gumby Gumbalassi The Most

From The Beat: Even with all your lyrical heat, you can't write this stuff in The Beat and ask us to believe, 'cause look where your gangsta ways got you! You may think this is just a pause in the action, but really it's a preview, a coming attraction, of how and where you'll be if you can't make your old gangster ways history. Get a j-o-b and stack away that regular pay in a bank where no one can touch it, 'cause Task find you with a couple of G's in your pants pocket — well, how long you think you still got it where you want it? Look around you now. Is this the life you want in your future? No way! No how! Quit and go legit. Then let true wisdom flow from your lips.

Another Day at Camp

What up, Beat? This the homie Dreamer from Hayward comin' at you from Camp. This program is gettin' old! Wakin' up everyday, doing the same thing, seeing the same ol' faces. Sometimes I really got to think twice about runnin'.

I don't got that much time left, maybe a month and some change. I'm just tryin' to get my GED so I could walk away from Camp with some'in', 'cause I ain't gonna be goin' to no high school when I get out. I just want to do my thing with no probation.

At least it won't be that easy for me to go back to jail, but when I do, I'm a go to Santa Rita. But I ain't even trippin', 'cause every homie will probably touch down in some adult institution. And when that happens, it will just be another day.

-Dreamer

From The Beat: Why accept the notion that you'll be going to an adult incarcerated facility? We don't mean you should lie to yourself, but that after you get your GED, you should get a legal j-o-b and stack your cash. Then do not spend it on drugs, which will keep getting more expensive for you to maintain, until you're tempted to slang to feed your habit — and then, you're more than halfway back to an incarcerated establishment. But it doesn't have to go like that, if you make up your mind to stay off the grind and leave the drug (alcohol is a drug, too) abuse behind — 'cause it's about that time!

People

people are so precious in my family
people that live so peacefully
like my grandma

people that are so sweet
and make you feel

like you can do anything
you feel like you want to do

people that don't get into any trouble
and is always on the right path

and is always positive to themselves and others
don't that make you feel so good

if not

think about all the positive
you will think if you ever meet

people so sweet

and kind

you will totally change your mind

-Snow Bunny Melody

From The Beat: Yes, yes, we're willing to bet that what you suggest is way more certain than just a guess. Just as you say, living with people like that can change your mind to where you want to change your ways. But it's still on you to choose what you do and with whom when you leave the family room and walk down the street. When you go to school, do you plan to learn or act a fool? Maybe it depends on the friends you choose, in which case, don't let the wrong friends choose you!

Fainting

dreaming that i'm back home
with my girl and my mama

i'm in the hood chilling with my ninja'
smoking purple on the block

that's what i dream about

being in the hood with my family
having nightmares

about being shot in the head

and about being locked up

-Lil' E

From The Beat: Wait a minute now, is this the same Lil' E who got himself back in the Hall for coming back late from his Christmas home visit? If so, then we know the dreams are warnings — prophecies sent by God. But biblical prophecies aren't like sorcery. They're merely warnings, like: If you continue to do what you used to do, this is how it will end you: shot in the head, or sleeping on a concrete slab bed behind bars. We suggest you give up the purple until you get your life straight, and if you do — you may not want to go back to being that same smoked-out foo'.

Emmit's Birthday

Man, my cousin Emmit's birthday just passed, January second. You know? I was supposed to be on like shhh, bra, but instead I'm in Camp Sweeney. I'm out.

-Lil' Black

From The Beat: The best way to show love and respect to a fallen friend is to help his family out whenever you can. But that doesn't mean making fast money in the street and giving some to his family — it means becoming the role model his sisters and brothers need to see, making money legally and giving some to his family! RIP Emmit.

Their Plan (Part Two)

Let's see, where do I begin at? Let's pick up where I left off at. Well, like I was saying, it's their plan to put us away — but at the same time, we fall for the set-up's in our communities.

See, why I say that, they flash all the dollar bills, then somehow put the drugs on the streets for us. The most numerous ethnic backgrounds are blacks and browns in the system. See, we got to stick together and show them that we can succeed in life.

Cops and such and whatnot, mess people of color! To me that's not right. My plan against theirs is to turn their plan against them. Until next time, it's your crazy Uncle Fairlas. GOD IS LOVE.

-Fairlas

From The Beat: Yes, God is love and we are all God's children, which makes us all brothers and sisters, regardless of ethnic background or skin color. As you point out, this notion is not universally accepted. So what's your plan to turn their plan against them? Uniting the oppressed by defining them in terms of their shared concerns instead of their bloody competition in the drug game? Believing as you do that God is Love, Jesus told his followers to be "cunning as a serpent and innocent as a dove" — which is to say, don't make yourself a victim of the power structure aka the system.

Camp Life

What's up, Beat? This ya boy Lil' Ant from Hayward. I'm up here at Camp doin' a six-to-nine month program. This place is hell a easy! I'm startin' to get into trouble though.

It's good. I've been up here workin', gettin' cashed out! I go to court in May. I hope I get out. I've got two incidents and four write-up's, but if I don't get any more, I should go home!

Well, Beat, I'm out till next time. To all doin' time, keep yo' heads up. To all fallen soldiers, RIP. I'm out.

-Lil' Ant

From The Beat: To all the fallen soldiers on whatever side of this senseless drug war bleeding the barrios dry of young men, sending them all to cemeteries or penitentiaries! Please! If home is no more than a battleground, your freedom will never be found to last for long. So for sure stay strong, but remember that there's no freedom without peace in these bullet-riddled streets.

Get Money

money on my mind
money all i am
getting
i love money more
than shoes, girl,
whip on rims
i love makin' money
on the block
do whatever i got
to do to get
the green i use
i make money the fast way
the ski mask way
or i strip somebody for the rims
and i stack my money
so one day
i will have so much
i won't go broke
on getting high or
having all the beezies
on me

-Lil' Oba

From The Beat: Look where you're at! You're acting like this is just a temporary setback, when in fact, it's a preview of coming attractions! Keep making money the way you do and you'll either be shot up or right back in here where you neither get high nor find any girls to share your world. Make your money slow but steady, getting that wholly legal 'fetti, and you can stay free to stack it — or fast as you make it, that's how fast you'll be back in.

Consequences

Today I'm going to talk about the consequences of the things you do in life. One of the things where I made a mistake and suffered the consequences, was when I acted up in this easy Camp program.

I guess sometimes I just felt short-tempered about the staff and some of the decisions they made. But I got to say that I need to get my stuff straight and focus on a goal, which is to pimp this program! Stay sharp, stay focused — because it doesn't matter if you got a dirty on a drug test, you're still strong.

I just can't wait 'till I get out this program in April! So stay up and stay out of juvenile hall or any jail facility! Don't let nothing keep ya down. I'm out.

-Twan

From The Beat: There are negative consequences, like having your home visit from Camp cancelled 'cause you caught a dirty or got too many write-ups or whatever; and then there are positive consequences, like the result of the thinking you've just laid down on paper, we expect will be more thoughtful decisions on your part. For example, the next time you feel short-tempered, instead of surrendering to the impulse to act out on it, you'll recognize the fact and pull yourself back because of the very fact that you recognize that you're feeling short-tempered at that moment. That's when you don't want to challenge a staff decision or policy, as opposed to when you feel cool, calm and collected to the point where you can handle not getting the response you want from them when you clarify your point of view without losing your self-control (but even then, it's a matter of delicate timing; approaching the staff person at a time and place where they're more likely to be receptive to listening to what you have to say, which is probably not at the moment they take a stand and feel like their authority is on the line). If you can do that, who knows, maybe next time 'round you'll get a "make-up call" coming your way.

Need Some Advice

What's up Beat! This is Lil' Porkey from Hayward. I'm up in maximum security, but I'm 'bout to go back to another unit because I finally found out I'm not going to CYA!

I'm going to this placement, but I know if I'm going to do good and go to college for either aircraft mechanic training or to become an electrician, but that's my goal. Well, I just want to say to all da homies up in Camp, stay up and finish that program so you can walk away free. But anyway, I need some advice from The Beat Within, well, G to G.

-Lil' Porkey

From The Beat: You almost went to the Y, and if you go back to your same old gangsta life style, that's what life has planned for you — lock you up in some institution where you get to bang your crew when you know you'll catch another case and never get out of that place. Or, change now, since you've been given a second chance — no matter what comes up, stay chill; walk away from those whose mentality remains ill; and you'll find that claiming that new life that will keep you free depends wholly on your own mentality. Stay strong and be true to yourself. You deserve better than to be stocked on some penitentiary shelf.

It's 2007 and I'm still in here

I don't want to spend my time in the hall. I try to make a way out by thinking that some day I'm going to be out. Still, sometimes I feel like my life is going down. But it's not, the last time I was wanted, was today by my girl, and every day I'll always be wanted from my family.

-Young Tay

From The Beat: In this piece you dipped down into pessimism in the third sentence, and then your natural cheer came in and lifted you up in the next sentence... it's like you rescued yourself from your own despair by remembering what you have to look forward to, and what you have to lift you. This is one of the amazing things about writing, is what you did just here: You can write yourself into hope. Of course, hope isn't enough, right? So if you really mean that you don't want to spend your life locked up, you must have a plan for how you'll change when you get out of it. Let's hear it — what's the plan?

Restricted For Thirty Days

I hope this letter of mine finds you in the best of health and spirits. So, with that said, what it do Beat? Well, just to introduce myself, this is Gangsta, kickin' back, up here in Camp, waitin' for the twenty-seventh to come up so I can go home!

I haven't been home since Christmas, and then I got restricted for thirty days — so my ash is hella dry! I need to meet some girls. But anyways, I want to take this time to extend my utmost love and respect to all those up in max unit, ain't no need for names 'cause you know who you are. Keep your head up above water and just be safe. Much love to ya!

-G

From The Beat: What got you restricted? Coming back late? Or dirty? Or getting in fights after you got back? What? Yeah, we see folks in max every week, and the truth is that they're all pretty much safer in there than on the street — which should tell you something about what you need to change in the life you lead if you really want your homies to be safe and free!

New Alcohol Test

Wass good! This the homeboy Savage from Berkeley, comin' at y'all. I'm hella mad, 'cause they just came out with a new alcohol test up at Camp — and I came out dirty!

I'm restricted for two weeks, and I only get a twelve-hour pass. And my homeboy Rascal's memorial is next week, and I'm restricted. So I might run if I don't get to go to his memorial. And I can't drink on my HV's no more! Hella mad!

-Savage

From The Beat: Don't run. Whatever else you do, don't run. Funk can jump off after a memorial service and that's the last thing you need, to be on the run caught up in some funk! Catch another charge (whether you "did it" or not), and you'll be wishing you even had another chance at Camp. You sound like not drinking for a few months is the worst thing in the world — it's not! It beats drinking "pruno" in the pen for one thing. Just chill, you still get out on a day pass for now, and in half a month's time a full weekend on the outs. You're getting yourself twisted like a pretzel.

I Know You Care

I can see it in your eyes
I know you love me because you tell me so often.
You must know that it's hard to express all the emotions I fell in my heart for you.

It's there
Every day, every night, every second of the hour
Every day of the year.
And in the years to come.
I pray that we will always mean this much to each other.

-Xavier

From The Beat: This is a heartfelt love poem, we are looking forward to seeing more of your work and publishing it in The Beat!

Santa Was My Parents

I believed in Santa for only a few years of my life. He took care of me as long as he lasted, when I found out Santa was my parents, I was surprised they were coming through the chimney but I caught them one morning and then I knew he wasn't real. So now they just ask what I want and I tell them.

Now I believe in God, because He answers my prayers and He helps me get through problems, phases, and trouble in my life.

-Anthony

From The Beat: Discovering that Santa doesn't come out of our chimney is part of a loss of innocence — but it sounds as if you still have something strong you can believe in. How does having faith make you stronger, how does it help you get through your challenges? And does having faith help you see what path you should take in the future?

Wanted By My Girl

The last time I felt wanted was when I was out 'cause my girl was always calling me telling me to come see her at her house. I miss those days. My way out is to beat my case and go the right way. If God gets me though, that's my way out.

-Lil' Rome

From The Beat: If you beat your case, that will get you out of Juvenile Hall, but what will it take you get you out of the lifestyle that got you caught up? Will you need to change your friends? Quit smoking weed (if you do now). Will you need to figure out how to make a good legit living? We want to know your LONG TERM way out... Your faith in God may help you find the strength to do it, but He won't do the heavy lifting for you.

That Person

The person in my life that is the hardest to please is my P-O. She won't believe what I say, she tells me she does, but then to my mom, and judge she says that I'm lying. I got released by judge last week on EM and PO discretion.

So far my P-O won't answer my calls or release me. I have been here two and half months and wonder how much longer I will have to wait.

-John

From The Beat: We're sorry to hear that you're not getting that attention from your PO. Hopefully by the time this piece comes out you'll have heard news from her. Let us know how it goes.

Life and Death

kill or be killed
is what i live by
laugh and break down
when them hot slugs fly
a thug can run
but he won't get far
bounced in that car
and thought he was gone
till some rolled up on
and they opened up on
him wit' a bullet to the dome
the streets are so rowdy
ninjas droppin' like rain
when one gets killed
the whole family feel the pain
grievin' and thinkin'
what did he do to deserve what he got
but hey what can anyone say but
talkin' big break a thug down
that all that the street know
kill for nothin' at all
'cause it's the way thugs live
but i'm out till next time
so i'm done
one

-Lil' Tb

From The Beat: It's a mess, a life full of stress, fast money followed by incarceration or death, not to mention how those dreams that come to those doing the killin' — ghosts of the dead rise from their wormy beds to live again in a killer's head. That's why so many try to go numb, try to make their heads go dead dumb, but once you've killed you'll never get away from the guilt. Blame it on the streets where thugs pack so much heat, you begin to believe it's kill or be killed — until prophecies of death are self-fulfilled, by young men so filled with stress and anxiety, they open fire on anyone in proximity who might look like he might coulda been hatin' — but the bullet misses him and finds an innocent victim to burst in. Time to change your brain, 'cause it's your mind that maintains murder in these streets full of crime.

Warrant

The last time I felt wanted was when I had a warrant out for my arrest.

-Lil' Marcus

From The Beat: No matter what happens, may you never lose your sense of humor!

Making Money is Risky Business

Making money now is like going to war. If you're grinding, you got to be a beast and keep a pistol on you at every time. You got to watch yo' friends too, because they be the ones hatin'. And the police be getting in business that they don't got nothing to do with.

-Lil' Sheiking

From The Beat: You are so right — it is a war, and it's a war that both sides lose. There's no trust, there's the police to watch out for, there's the stress that goes along with it, there's the drugs people take to cope with the stress, and there's the fact that the product you sell is one that hurts people. But there are a lot of people who believe that grinding is the only way to make money, or else maybe they think it will be easier than working a job or going to school. Now that you know how hopeless that war is — have you thought of other ways to make your money? Ways to get out of the war? How 'bout stop breaking the law. Put the gun down, leave the drugs and the dirty money?

High Speed Chase

I remember when I was driving one time me and my potnas and I was turning the corner and somebody ran into a cop on a bike and me and my potnas was like what the hell? We looked at him and started laughin' and went to the store and got some swishers, smoked and later that night, got into a high speed chase, and I didn't get caught, and it wasn't my first one.

-Lil' Dame

From The Beat: OK, you didn't get caught that time, but do you know how many people die in high speed chases? Sometimes it's not even the people in the car, just some innocent kid crossing the street. It's all one big game of Russian roulette, put that gun down before it's too late!

With My Family But They Don't Know It

One thing they don't know about me, is that when I go home, I be with my family all day at the house, with my girl. But when you come back to Camp, they think you be at the street all day.

You be tryin' to tell them that you did good. They be thinkin' you lyin'. They think you be at streets hangin' out wit' your potnas all day. And now they got me restricted for two weeks! I was supposed to go home next week, but they played me.

So I gots to wait 'till next month, the tenth of February! But it's nothing I could do about it. So fudge it! I can wait, it's nothing. Well, I'm about to cut this short. Holla back Beat writers and readers!

-Young Slot1

From The Beat: In the system or out in the world, it seems like there's always a time gap between you're doing right and people seeing you as a do-right person. They still see you for who you were when you were doing what you were doing on your way here. When you realize that, then you won't feel like you're getting punished for doing right. Consider it karma for what you did in the past, but don't give up on doing right in the present, 'cause in the future you'll get that good karma coming at you!

I Got Pepper Sprayed...

...like a month ago for starting a riot and that shhh burns.

-Lil' Dame

From The Beat: Man, what a tease! You give us the newspaper headline, but not the article that goes with it! We'd love to hear the rest of this story.

Win My Cases

My way out is to win my cases and God is going to prepare me a way out. So I could get out and do what I please. My way out is to make sure I get these charges dropped to go home. I'm going to do what I do, be getting off my money and doing whatever I need to stay out.

-Lil' Marcus

From The Beat: See, when we read something like "So I could get out and do what I please," we realize that you don't really have a way out planned at all. Getting out doesn't just mean getting out of jail, it means getting out of the whole bloody violent and shady lifestyle that claimed more than 150 lives last year in Oakland alone. If you just go back to doing what you please, without planning for the future, what good will it do you? What about getting out for real, getting out the game, out of the streets, out of the system forever?

Hard To Please My Mom

The people that make it hard to please is my mom, because she wants more and expects a lot more than what is. But it's my fault because I don't do what is expected.

-Kevin

From The Beat: What are the things your mom expects of you that you don't do? Does she want you to do things you don't want? Or is she wanting you to do the things that will help you stay out of trouble? One of the things about parents is that almost always, the thing they want for their children is that they want their children to be happy, to be strong, to thrive, to be free. Is that what your mom wants for you?

My Fine Lady

What's up my lady, my fine ass baby.
You know I love you and I know you love me too.
Damn just look at yo' face and yo' perfect hairdo
Mamaz I love you with all my might.
First thing I noticed about you was your sexy height.
Hey my baby, you drive my crazy.
I'm wonderin' when we'll have our own baby.
I wish I had you by my side.
And take in my scrape for a little ride.
Baby you're my girl
I told you, you are my whole world
All this and so many memories in my mind.
First time I see you, you looked so fine.
I love you Mamaz

-Mike Jonez

From The Beat: This a cheerful side of your love for your girl, the hair, the car, the height — it's bubbly and light like a song from the sixties, we almost wish it had a tune to go with it. Yet, you must remember, this love you have for your girl keeps you strong, but prepare yourself for a fall, how much longer can the hold on? We do hope when you return home there will be a seriousness to your life and handling your business, school, work, some success before even considering a baby.

My Life Out In the Streets

Me, they call me Midget out in the streets. Why? Because I'm crazy out there. They know I get down.

But the way I started to live my life as a gang member: I got locked up for having a pistol in my patna's car. I used to smoke and do drugs to get my stress out. Now that I am at Camp, I've tried to change my life around. I'm trying as hard as I can.

-Midget

From The Beat: Changing your life around will be the hardest and most important task you take on in your entire life, because everything and everyone in your future life is on the line. We are convinced that if you simply continue to "try" as hard as you can, and refuse to give up no matter what — you will succeed. But it's an everyday thing, which doesn't mean you can't relax or have fun. In fact, you need to find some positive activities that are both relaxing and fun, then schedule them into your life. Otherwise, all work and no play will have you going back to your old ways out of sheer emotional fatigue. So trying as hard as you can, also means as smart as you can — not in the sense of "getting over" on anyone but in the sense of being smart about what will help you change your life and what won't.

What Nobody Knows

I'm the type of person that goes out, get high and drink. I get so drunk half the time I really don't think.

-Darryl U3

From The Beat: You proved you don't think with those last two lines, which we took out! By getting so drunk and high you can't think, all you're doing is allowing others to determine your life's course. It appears that you like others making your decisions for you. Some people do. We don't.

What I Have Seen

I have saw ninjas get robbed
I saw ninjas get they ass beat
I saw ninjas get shot in the face
I saw fake ninjas back down

I saw ninjas turf hop
One day it's the bottom, next it's the top

I saw ninjas get killed
I saw ninjas come to jail

I saw ninjas get out of jail

But mostly I like to see people tell me my work is two thumbs up!

-Yung Quez U3

From The Beat: No question you've seen a lot of nasty stuff, YQ. So can we tell you what we mostly like to see — you, never coming to this place again!

The Halls

Yaaadda! What it do Beat? The new halls is hella garbage. They put a toilet in our room with a sink. Now I gotta smell the next ninja... And then new ninjas be up in here tryin' to get sick, but end up getting they ass beat. They try to come in there and end up getting swooped.

-Yung Quez U3

From The Beat: You know, Yung Quez, if you focused more on what brought you here (and, therefore, what would keep you out of here), then you wouldn't have to smell anyone but yourself or think about other young men "tryin' to get sick." This place is not supposed to be a Holiday Inn, so you either better find a way to stay out... or get used to it!

My Lil' Brother

That person close to me in my life is my lil' brother. I don't want my brother to come through this place or other places. When I am home, I always spend time wit' him and tell him don't do the same things I did.

-Young Meez U3

From The Beat: Of course it's important to tell your little brother what not to do. But he won't listen. You didn't listen, did you? Of course not. Children don't care what you say. They only care what you do. So if you truly don't want your brother following you here, then you have to lead by example. Nothing else will do. If you keep doing what brought you here, then you can be sure your brother will, too, whatever pretty words you have for him.

My Mom — The Hardest To Please

That person is my mom. She is the hardest ta please. I don't know why, but she is. Ta tell the truth, sometimes I don't even want to talk to her, and that's messed up. I try and I just want her to see that.

And just because I come in the house late and drink a little, and smoke killa, sometimes I think she look at me different 'cause out of all my brothers and sisters. I'm ashamed to say that.

But about the common ground thing, I don't know how to make it work with her. Sometimes I don't wanna try, but that's the person that I wrote about.

-D M U4

From The Beat: Do you have little brothers and sisters? Do you want them to smoke and drink? The example you give them is the example they will follow, whatever you might tell them. If it were your house and you had a son living there who wouldn't follow your rules, whatever they might be, how would you deal with that situation? We suggest that if you don't want those little ones who look up to you to do certain things, then you'd better stop doing them yourself.

My PO

The person I find hard to please is my probation officer. I'm innocent and he not trying to believe me and my story. He think I'm a criminal or a convict, and I keep telling him that I'm innocent. This my first time in here, and he should kind of believe me, but he don't. He think I'm full of BS.

-Rocket U3

From The Beat: Look at it from his point of view, Rocket. Can you imagine the number of times young men have told him they were innocent? We believe you, but how does he know who to believe and who not to believe. The important thing is that this is your first time in the hall, which means — if you have brains, and we think you do — that this is also the last time for you to be here. Are we right? Time will tell.

Can't Please My Girlfriend

That one person that I find hardest to please is my girlfriend. I am saying that this is a hard thing, but my girlfriend is like a 4.0 student, and I am just a locked-up student.

People think that we are the opposite, but we really aren't. In school maybe we are, but in reality we aren't. We are alike because we like the same kinda food, we both like to hang out, we both like to talk on the phone, and we both like to talk.

-Jacky

From The Beat: Apparently, your girlfriend can eat, hang out, talk on the phone, and just talk, and still keep her grades at the top. And just as apparently, we think you need to talk on the phone less, hang out less, and study more. Seems pretty clear, doesn't it? And by the way, you're very smart to hook up with a 4.0 student! Let her habits rub off on you!

The Person

My goons is the hardest to get through to because they are Talibans and they don't care about the next ninja that they don't know or never seen before. They be cool sometimes when they sober, but they act a fool when they ain't feelin' you dough.

But me and my goons love the girls because that what keeps us out of trouble at some point in the day. Anyways, we love to be at the schoolhouse because that's where you find them at.

(to be continued...)

-Twon U3

From The Beat: The idea that your "goons" are Talibans is very funny to us, because we know a lot about what the Taliban, and we don't think it has much to do with what you and your goons believe and do. Every act by the Taliban is done in the name of God; is that true for you and your goons? For the Taliban, all alcohol is prohibited, which is obviously not true for you and your goons. As for "the girls," under the Taliban they were not allowed to go to school, to drive cars, or even to expose any part of their bodies in public except their eyes! If you were really with the Taliban, we don't believe you or your goons would last the day. You and your goons should stop trying to be what you aren't, and start focusing on what you are — and what you want to be. If the answer to that last question is: "I want to be enslaved by this system," then just keep doing what you're doing...

My Dog

When I was at home, my mom and my dad was at work, and I found a dog. I brung the dog home and I fed it. Then my mom came home and she said, "What the hell! Get the dog out my house!" My mom was mad, but she let me keep it and I keep it tell it grow.

-Shadow

From The Beat: what was the dog's name, Shadow? Do you still have it? Who's taking care of it now. What did it look like?

The New Building

Man, it's all bad up in here. We got tiers and a bathroom in our room, but it ain't nothin' if you don't be playin' head call games. This ain't nothin' for me. I'm finna be out though.

-Young Ant U3

From The Beat: The amount of time you are able to stay out will tell us just how much you hated it here. If you come back, we'll know you didn't hate it enough!

Messed Up

What's up with The Beat? I don't have anything to talk about this week. Man, I need to get out. Today is my big bra and my ninja birthday, and I'm locked up. That's messed up but I got myself into all this. I hope I get out some day. I been here for too long, but I'm out. Happy birthday.

-B. Wizz U3

From The Beat: When you say, "that's messed up," you really mean, "I messed up." You don't have to "hope" you get out some day, you will get out for sure. But then the real work happens. If you make no changes, you'll be back. You know what brought you here. You know what you have to give up. Whether you do or not — whether you hate it here enough or not — will determine your actions, and your actions will determine your future.

They Don't Know

They don't know I got a...

They don't know I'm hardly on the block

I'm in school

Doin' what I need to, not what I want

Things I've done can't be done

Things I've seen you would not believe

Yeah, I got stabbed and I'm looking for vengeance

But when I get it's gonna be in the worst way

And I'm goin' to be in the same place I'm at now

Locked with no way of getting my pay

I make ten racks in a day

It's all smooth till the boys come

But it's the Bay so just know

It's whatever whenever

But the hard truth is I lost my brother to the gun and raised his little girl

I got enough money to do it but I also lost my homies to the gun and love my baby girl

-Li' Burn U3

From The Beat: We're very sorry about your brother and the homies you've lost, but there is much in this piece that tell us you have a lot of growing up to do, and we hope you do it before you find yourself wishing for things to be different. If you don't see that "the boys" will always come. It's built into the lifestyle you've chosen. Ten racks a day? Who are you making those racks for now, except the keepers you so casually handed your freedom to. But the most immature of all the immaturity in this piece is your idea that you can be God! In planning that "worse revenge," you are spitting in God's face. Maybe you don't know (or care) that in Romans 12:19-21, Saint Paul wrote, "...never avenge yourselves, but leave room for the wrath of God; for it is written, 'Vengeance is mine, I will repay,' says the Lord." Let God take care of revenge, and you take care of you. If you insist on your childish pursuits, the system will choose your future for you.

The New Place

Man, what's up with The Beat? Man, this new place is really not cool 'cause they be havin' us in our room hella much, man. Little o' courtyard that they gave us.

But we got a gym to play some ball. But this shhh in here ain't cool to me. Three-minute showers, plus people in here be snitchin' on people more than ever now. But I'm just ready to get out "this new place" on da real though.

-D U4

From The Beat: Well, we're glad you're about to get out, but is this your first time getting out of here? If the answer is "No," then it's up to you to figure out what you have to stop doing in order to stop coming here. If you come back, we'll have to conclude that it wasn't as bad here as you described...

A Dog Story

I had a dog when I was out. His name was Finsta, and he was white and brown. He loved to kill cats, so I let him, only if he won his dog fight. He killed 95% of the cats and then had to move. So he was in tha back, maintainin'. And then someone called the SPCA on him and he was runnin' for two days and got caught, and that it.

-Li'l D U4

From The Beat: You're not going to like our response, but we think someone should have called the SPCA on you, not the dog. The dog was only following the leader, and you were the leader, leading your dog to do things that are cruel to the dog, to other dogs, and to all those cats. (We wonder how you would feel if it was your cat that a dog killed, and the owner allowed it to do so!) We find nothing nice about this dog story at all — because it tells us more about you than the dog... and what it tells us is that the most dangerous animals on earth are human beings.

I Think Before I Act

Well, I got something that people don't know about me is how I think before I act. Some things I do, I think before I do it, like smoking and knowing that I get pee tested every week, and knowing that I can't hide the drug in my body. I think about how I'm going to get wrapped up the day I go get pee tested. That why my mom said, "Think before you do something," and people like my PO think I act before I do something. So that something that they don't know.

-JB U4

From The Beat: Were you thinking before you did whatever act that brought you in here? If you can control your behavior because of the fear of immediate negative consequences (testing dirty, for example), then is it possible for you to think even farther into the future to see the consequences that await you down the line? We hope so.

Sav It Out

Yeah, yeah, I'm in the building. This gon' be my 17th time getting locked up and I ain't even tryna come back. My PO want me to go to YA, but I'm tryin' to go to ROP or the Ranch.

This new hall is weak. I don't wanna be here no longer. I gotta do a year or more wherever I go. I ready to sav this time out and get ghost.

-Li'l Spitta U4

From The Beat: What difference does it make if you get ghost or not, if you have already come back 17 times? Wouldn't it be easier just to move your bed into the hall (or the some other jail), and call it home? You say you're not "tryna come back," but it sure looks like you are. What are you "tryna" do?

Can't Wait

Cant wait to get out of this hell hole and go to Chino Hills to Boys Republic or Tri-pod. Out this hole.

-Armond U4

From The Beat: You managed to give us two short sentences after almost an hour's workshop. If you don't step up — if you try to slide by with the least amount of effort — it won't matter whether you go to Boys Republic, Tri-pod or the White House. Time never comes back. Don't waste it.

I Show My Soft Side The Most

One thing about me they don't know is that I'm really not that type of person that is strong. To tell you the truth, I show my soft side the most, so I get along with anybody that doesn't piss me off.

-Mk U4

From The Beat: We'd like to hear more about this, MK, because we think it takes a certain amount of courage (which isn't soft at all), to talk about having a soft side. Most boys locked up put on a hard front, a shell to cover that soft side they don't want anyone to see. You have the strength to be real, and that tells us a lot about you. At the same time, we'd also like to know how you manage to hide that side of you when someone "pisses you off." What makes you angry, and how do you handle your anger? We like what you've written, but we want to know more.

That Person Is My PO

To me that person I find hard to please is my Probation Officer, because no matter how hard I try a kiss up to him, it doesn't work. The only time he is nice is when I do good or when he has a good day (which is mostly not.)

-Mk U4

From The Beat: You're too smart to think that kissing up to your PO will be what pleases him. (How many other young men and women do you think he's met who've tried that route?) If he's only nice to you when you "do good," then what's keeping you from doing good?

I Do Not Know What To Do

I supposed to get out next week. I get interviewed today and I'm going to the group home. I don't know if I should run or stay, because I talk to my sister and she was like, "Come home. I miss you," and that made me sad. What should I do? Should I stay or run?

-G U4

From The Beat: If you run, you're going to run right back into the box — and for longer time. Of course your sister misses you. You are responsible for her feeling that pain, and the only way to take the responsibility that is yours is to suck it up and do your program. Running is what children do. Standing and facing the music is what adults do. It's time to be an adult. Even if your sister cannot understand, you are doing it as much for her as for yourself.

This Juvie's Better

I don't really know what to write, but I really want to get out! I'ma wait for when I get out...

The new juvie I think is better because it's more cleaner. It has a nice gym. But the only thing I don't like is that it's smaller.

-Kwes U6

From The Beat: You will get what you want. You will get out. And then what? That's what we're waiting to hear, and to see...

My Family Is Hardest To Please

The person that's hardest to please, well not a person, but my family because they all expect me to do things that's right. In reality, I find to hard to do. Also, I try in some ways to please them, but in some ways I'm addicted to he fast lane, getting fast money, drivin' scrapes, buckets, just the simple fact that I'm getting it.

I ain't gonna lie. I told some of my family members, "Forget you," 'cause they said they ain't messin' wit' me. So when I blow up, I ain't goin' to try and please them. That's why I only buy stuff for my mom., my two lil' bra's, grandma, my uncle, and my squad members that do for me, cha heard.

-Young Mike U4

From The Beat: Oh yeah, we heard, but did you? Why do you think your family tells you to stop doing what you don't want to stop doing? (If you were the father of someone in your situation, what would you be telling your child?) If you're "addicted to the fast lane," then be prepared to get addicted to jail life, because there will be a lot more of it in your future. If you open your eyes and keep it real, tell us where your fast money is now, where your buckets are now, where your girls are now? The "fast money" you're making is all going into the pockets of the system you hate, but you keep it alive and thriving. They thank you.

Change

I do it for the chedda. That's why I wanna change 'cause I know it's another way to life, and for my ninja, when you come home from the Y. It's bigger in another away when you come home, like getting a job. That's what chedda would've wanted for us.

So just watch over us. But don't get me wrong, I still be on the block, but I just think a little smarter though.

-M U4

From The Beat: We don't see much chance for you to change if you go back to the block. Oh, we believe you think you can do it, but we have seen far too many examples of young men saying they want to change, but not making the sacrifices they need to make in order to change. The fact that you declare that you will go back to the block tells us that you aren't "a little smarter," even though you think you are. We hope you get smarter before you have to learn a very hard lesson.

New Year

Spent my new years in jail and lord know it was hell. But it's nothing. Still thuggin' it out

-Ken U6

From The Beat: You must like hell, because you've committed yourself here to a lot more of it. As long as "it's nothing," just keep enjoying yourself taking orders.

A Dog Story

When I was a little kid I had a dog name "Selise." He was a Rottweiler. The color of my dog was black and brown. He used to ride me and my sister on his back around the house and sleep wit' us in our beds. I don't remember why me dog was gone, but my mom told me that it got put to sleep.

-Young Meez U3

From The Beat: The saddest thing about having animals that we love is that they usually die sooner than we do. When you get out of here, do you want to get another dog? What is your favorite dog breed? Why?

Smart?

The thing that they do not know about me is that I am smart and funny and goin' to play. I am a cool ninja on the outs. I just smoke weed and gun play.

-Donald U4

From The Beat: We put a question mark after "smart" because we see nothing smart about gun play. Ask all the young homies who have paid with their lives if they think it was smart... Oops, you can't ask them, can you, because they'll never be able to answer any questions ever again!

One Thing They Don't Know

One thing about me they don't know is I like tropical whatever. Why? I like the feeling, I be feeling myself, but I can't do it here because I'm on lockdown. I just be sleepy 'cause I'm not myself, getting hyphy.

Another day out of juvenile hall getting interviewed by another group home. I'm goin' out juvenile doors, but what I'ma do for myself when I get out? I think about being a auto body mechanic. Gramps was a mechanic and it inspired me on doin' it also. I like working on cars. Why work on cars, because it a natural high. I get paid for it.

-Jason U6

From The Beat: We encourage you to follow your dream into auto mechanics. You're right, it is a job that pays the rent, and if you get a natural high from it, then all the better. But even auto mechanics need to read, write and do arithmetic in their job, so don't forget school!

Locked Up Again

Man, I'm locked up again for a gun charge. But you know, they want to send me to Glen Mills, and I'm ready to do my program and go back home to da block. But it wasn't cool how I got caught up on New Year's Eve. I was messin' with my girl and ma lil' cousin, and the black and whites pulled up on me. They chased me, grabbed me, threw me to da ground and pulled ma gun from ma waistline. Then I really started thinking I will never see ma family again.

-Lil' Junk U7

From The Beat: You haven't really started thinking yet, Lil' Junk. If you had, you wouldn't be already planning to go "back home to da block," even before beginning your program. We hope you do start thinking, though, and real soon, because if you don't, that decent program won't help you at all. Go with an open mind, and don't start planning what you're going to do afterwards until you learn what they have to teach. It might change your entire outlook.

Three Weeks Out, And Back In

Well, back in here again. I wasn't even out for three weeks. So just to keep it moving, I'ma plead guilty to all my charges and deal with my consequences and go home as fast as I can to my family, and girlfriend. I love them all very much.

We also moved into the new juvie now called "JJC" (Juvenile Justice Center) instead of what is used to be called (YGC). And the weird part 'bout it was it came in a day before we were moved.

-Angel U6

From The Beat: It seems obvious to us that your problem is not going home, it's staying home! If you allowed yourself just three weeks to be with those you now "miss very much," before giving the system power to take you from them yet again, then it's time to deal with the things that bring you here. Pleading guilty to your charges is one strategy for moving things forward faster. Having no charges to plead to is a far better strategy for moving your life forward — and showing (not saying) how much you love those you've left behind.

Change

This new juvenile hall is sucking. Hella boring. And it always smells 'cause you got your own bathroom in yo' room. It will be cool if you could leave and return when you want, but then it wouldn't be jail.

-Chicano U6

From The Beat: Yes, it would definitely be cool if you could leave and return when you want. We call that home. We suggest when you get there again, you realize what you've got, and hold onto it!

That Person I Fail To Please

One person that I've tried to please, but I've failed so many times, is myself. Everything I do, I think I'm not doing my best. One example of this is when I'm in school. I always think I can do better than I'm doing, I'm not putting in 100%.

-Jokes U6

From The Beat: You've identified both the problem and the solution in this short piece, Jokes. You can't think you're "doing your best" while not putting in 100%. Step up your game and you won't disappoint yourself nearly as much as you have in the past.

Keep Yo' Head Up

Keep yo' head up because when you get locked up you got to keep yo' head up. The reason why I said this because when you locked up, you think about a whole lot of stuff that going to break you down like your family, your girl and your homies, and that's not going to change unless you keep yo' head up. So when somebody tell you keep yo' head, you can't think about too much stuff. So keep yo' head up.

-Speedy U7

From The Beat: It is good to keep your head up, Speedy, but it doesn't move you forward in any way. You've got to do way more than that. You say you start thinking about things when you're locked up, but are you thinking about how you gave the system all the power it needed to take you from your family, your girl and your homies? Are you thinking about your responsibility for where you are, and how you've let your family and girl down by leaving them? If you don't start thinking about these things, you'll continue making the mistakes that take you from all you love. If you are moving from childhood to adulthood, one of the primary characteristics of that transition is accepting responsibility for one's own choices. Are you ready for that?

No More Time, Please

Man I'm mad because they try to send me to the Y for five years. I love my ninjas. Man, if I get sent to the Y I'm go miss hella shhh for real. I'm go miss the homies, ma female, and most important the fam bam, ya heard.

Ninja, I just did 15 months in this place. I ain't tryna do no mo' hard time.

-Fat Thug U7

From The Beat: You say you aren't "tryna do no mo' time," but if you just did 15 months, get out and come right back, then some people might conclude that you are trying to do more time. Are you mad at "them" for trying to send you to the Y, or at yourself for giving them the power to do it?

When Will I Get Out?

I'm still wondering when will I even get a chance to know when I am getting out. I've been in here for a month and a half, and I don't even know how much longer I gotta be in this place. Even though we currently moved into the new building, it is still a jail. The windows in the new building in our rooms have a clear view of the sky, trees, sunlight, and the weather. It reminds me of the outs, and it just gets me anticipating to be out of this place ASAP.

Like three days ago, I had the feeling of being at the stage of how I was when I just came in. It felt hella bad because when I just came in this place, I was hella hoping to get out in a week or so.

That same feeling came back just three days ago. It felt pretty bad, because it made my heart and mind desperately wanting to get out of this place.

But anyways, that's all I'm gonna say for now. Happy Holiday's Beat!

-Lil' J U7

From The Beat: Would it be easier to be locked up if you could not see the sky, the trees, the sunlight and the weather? One of the worst aspects of being locked up is not knowing anything about how far the process has moved, when things will change, what lies ahead. We think we would be feeling the same anxiety that you're going through, not know what's coming, and not having any power to change it. We hope this has been enough of a wake-up call for you to see the only solution to your problem is never to come back.

T-R-U-S-T

Truth between friends
Responsibility
Understanding
Secrecy is not honesty, but honesty is key
Tough to gain... even tougher to regain

-Kk U6

From The Beat: Yes, tough to regain, but not impossible. What are you doing to regain the trust of those whose trust is important to you?

I Believe

I believe that everything that you do bad comes back to you. So everything that I do that's bad I'm going to suffer from it. But in my mind, I believe what I'm doing is right. So I feel like I'm going to heaven.

-Hot-Rod U7

From The Beat: To be honest, HR, this makes no sense to us at all. First, you acknowledge that what you're doing is bad (your word). Then you tell us you think what you're doing is right. How can doing bad be right? And more important, how can doing bad lead you to heaven? Do you think God's a chump that you can get over on? What is your idea of heaven, and of God? And what is your idea of your relationship to God? We're curious, because we don't understand.

Why?

Why am I fighting to live when I'm just living to fight? Why am I trying to see, when there ain't nothing in sight.

Why am I trying to give when no one gives my a try? Why am I dying to live, when I'm just living to die? Someone tell me.

-Hot Rod U7

From The Beat: Do you believe in a Creator, Hot Rod, a God who made you and all life? If you do, then maybe finding the answers to these questions is His purpose for your life. But whether you do or not, one thing's for sure — no one other than you can answer your questions.

My Older Sister Is That Person

While I was growing up, I felt that I was really close to my older sister. But, when I hit my teen years, we started to grow apart, like when I went to visit her down South with my twin sister.

When we finally got down there after a three-day bus ride, the time we spent down there wasn't a good one. But out of all the things that we been through, I will still love my sis.

-Young Meel U7

From The Beat: We would love more details about this trip, and why you were disappointed how your big sister related to you. Tell us how close you were as kids, and why you think you drifted apart. Were there other things about the South that you liked? Tell us all about that trip.

Dumb Puppy

Here a story of a little puppy. Me and my friend was chilling in a photo store in Chinatown. At first we were messing with the puppy, then I played tug-a-war. After that, I made him fetch for his toy. He ran very fast, so when it came to the end, it smacked hard on the wall. It was very funny, so we kept doing for, like, five times. Then it starts to get smarter-it just won't go after it anymore, but I enjoyed a little laugh.

-Weapon, LCRS

From The Beat: It is a funny story at first and then over time the dog gets smarter and stops being the brunt of your joke, as do many people, we wake up!

One Thing They Don't Know

One thing about me that they don't know I have a lot of game for all people. I keep my mouth closed and my ears open.

-Tone U7

From The Beat: You certainly keep your mouth closed in this two-sentence piece. Is this the best you could come up with in nearly an hour to write? Maybe another thing people don't know about you is that you only put in a minimal effort.

Monte And Ant In Paradise

I want to say Happy Birthday to my ninja, Monte. His birthday passed. I really love my ninja. We really been through hella shhh. Now that my ninja is gone, I can't do nothin' while I'm at the Ranch but just talk to the homies about what we been through, how we used to be on the block, drinkin' smoking weed, an' doin' what we do—thuggin' it out, basically.

If you ain't none of my ninjas, then you don't know how that shhh feel—to lose hella homies.

My ninja, Monte, is one of a kind, an' my ninja didn't even live to see his daughter grow up or his nineteenth birthday.

I want my ninjas to be safe—beefin' comes later. It's time to bail out. I mean, I'm a banger—I don't believe in God, I believe in banging.

I love you, Monte and Ant in Paradise.

-Young Jeff LCRS

From The Beat: We are sorry for the loss of your homies, but what saddens us is that their deaths have not inspired you to better your life one bit. What will it take? Too many young people are also hurting big time when their people get hurt or are killed? You fighting, they fighting, we fighting, nobody ever wins!

The Spirit

Christmas is a time that you need to be with your family and your loved ones. But now I'm here at the Ranch doing my time and I'm not gonna be able to be with my family. But is all good.

Next Christmas I'm gonna be with my family, especially with my mom, because she's sad, 'cause I'm here, but you know—this is part of life that I'm living now.

To al in the outs, take care and don't go to some other ass place, just go with your families. Just be cool and take care. See y'all next Christmas.

-Playboy LCRS

From The Beat: But you know it's not all good with your mom that you're down at the Ranch. And when you're home again, it really isn't going to be all right with her when you hit the streets again. She knows she can't protect you at the Ranch or in the streets, so why don't you seriously consider what she goes through every time she knows you're out there? Why can't you keep yourself safe for your own sake, as well as hers?

The System Is The Hardest To Please

The system and how it really works. Also the probation officers who think that you not going to make good of yourself when you get out. It's hard to please those people 'cause I'm young and black and the charges that the system don't think I should be free with my family.

-Young G U4

From The Beat: Do you think the system treats all young black men the same, or do your actions speak as loud as your race and age? How do some young black men stay out of the system altogether, so they never have to deal with a PO?

Wanting To Change On The Inside

One thing that no one knows is that from the outside I may look like I don't want to change, but on the inside I really do want to change. I want to change to be a bad student to a good student.

-Jacky U3

From The Beat: We admire your desire to become a good student, because we think education is your key to a different — and better — future. But you had almost an hour to write this, so we know you could have given us much more. One rule about becoming a better student is that you can't be lazy about it. Yes, it can be work for you to write and to study, but unless you do, you'll always be wishing for something that won't happen. Good luck.

Street Dreams

We just these little kids

Feelin' lost in the world

Sleepless nights

Me and the wife

Ridin' home to Chinatown

Out to get dead presidents

To represent

'Cause my lil' mans need presents

And gifts

Moms and lil' sis

I reminisce

As I sit in jail

Man, I miss you like hell

The late nights

We play fight

In our lil' world

Waitin' on the thirty

Livin' life in romance

'Cause the traffic too heavy

So we stuck to the program

Bapes and hoodies

But I'm locked away

Wit' no plan

Grapes and a fully

Do you understand?

Man, I'm through wit' the life

My love, ya got me?

'Cause he tucked away

Awaitin' for the day

To stop me

No plans

But to start it all over from scratch

Don't really know how to do that

But I could do it all

If you got my back

The way out

-B Littles LCRS

From The Beat: Wouldn't the best gift for your family be for you to be home with them, alive and safe? Who is tucked away waiting to stop you? If you really want to start over, are you ready to give up whatever it is you do? What good could ever come from this life you have lead thus far? Wake up!

No Ninja Love

-Capone U6

From The Beat: Seek your silly revenge if you want, but not in our pages. Why do we call it silly? Because your focus is that of a child: "Mommy, he's a tattler tale." If you do nothing for someone to run to mommy to tattler, you won't have to worry.

The Person That Put Me Here

The person I think about is the person that put me in here. I don't know why he would ever do that to me. Every day when I get in to that cell, I ask why? That one person that I thought that was my friend stabbed me in the back. He know that I didn't know anything about what he did. There still time.

-Superman U7

From The Beat: One thing we've learned is that people will almost always try to get out of their own responsibility by giving up someone else, if the consequences for taking personal responsibility might put them behind walls. Learn from this, and choose your friends wisely. We hope the system sorts this out in time, so that you don't have to take the punishment for someone else's act.

One Thang 'Bout Me

-Geezy U7

From The Beat: Not one word of what you wrote taught anyone anything — except that you are still waiting to grow up. The Beat wants elders to be teaching the youngsters something that might keep them free. Instead, you're a youngster who doesn't need to be leading anyone else to lock-up. Maybe your brain will kick in at the Ranch. Maybe it won't. We'll wait and see.

Waiting...

What's up Beat? This ya boy that be feeling good, ya heard...

But man, I'm on my way to the Ranch in a minute. 'Bout to be wit' da homies for 12 months.... Den I'm chop, chop, back on da block, wit a plan... a whole different me. Smarter, more aggressive, I'ma be unstoppable ya heard, but dat's me chillin' up here doin' dead time waiting to knock this time out.

-Feeling Good U7

From The Beat: Yeah, you're definitely doing dead time, but it has everything to do with you and nothing to do with the system. Your plan to go back to the block already proves you're no smarter, however your little boy's mind wants to think about it. We're sorry you haven't taken the time you've been given to think. (We mean THINK!) When you start, let us know.

They Don't Know Al Bundy!

One person who don't know me is the shady-ass judges. Man, they don't know where a ninja come from, what a ninja about, or how my life is. If the judge only knew how it really was on the outs, they probably see where we coming from 'cause, to tell you truth, this shhh really grimy out here.

If I was a judge, I'll let all my homies go, don't matter what they did. But if them ninjas come in here I'm fo' sholly go play them, on mamas.

I'm just livin' life day by day, keeping ma head above this dirty-ass water, ya heard. And one thing I would want the world to know is that I'm not a criminal... even though I am a criminal, I don't want them to know that.

Damn bra, I go to my 707 hearing on the 16th, 17th and 18th. I hope everything go good. You mutt-ass ninjas wish me luck. I'm out 'cause I'ma beast.

-Al-Bundy U7

From The Beat: Look, Al, you've got to decide who you're trying to impress when you write these pieces. Your homies and us "mutt-ass ninjas" may be amused, but it's those "shady-ass judges" who have power over your life. So why not try to keep it at least a little real. If you were a judge who released every homie who came before you, regardless of the crime, how long do you think you'd keep your job? The truth is, we know a few judges (very few) who've actually come out of the same environment which produced you and your homies. They have had that special drive, that certain "something" that's let them rise above those circumstances, go to college, go to law school and, finally, be appointed as judges. They DO know where the youngsters who come before them come from, but that doesn't mean they let them go. If you want to be understood, can you see that maybe you also should try to understand their lives, what they've experienced, what they've overcome? But in the end, Al, there's nothing you (or we) can do about the system in general. All any of us can do is make changes in our own lives, if we want things to be different. That responsibility falls on your shoulders, and we know from talking to you that you understand this as well as we do. So why not use the opportunity The Beat gives you to talk about the real difficulties people in your situation (on the street and in the system) have — and then put some words to paper about how you choose to deal with them.

That Person

The hardest person to please is my grandmother because she want me to stop doing all the bad things I been doing in the past. She know I can do right. Anybody can do right, but it's hard.

I truly want better for myself. I really want to make my great grandmother proud of me. I want her to be able to talk about me in a good way.

-Lgb U4

From The Beat: We've asked this question before, LGB, but we'll ask it again: Is being locked up easy? We know the answer, so it would seem that you have to do this hard thing ("do right") or do that hard thing (keep getting locked up). Your grandmother not only knows what you are capable of doing, but she knows which if those two hard choices leads to an easier future. She sounds like a very wise woman to us, and when you have wisdom in your family, what do you think you should do with it?

They Envy Sey-Sey

They envy me
'Cause they know I look good
They wanna compete
But I wish they would
They envy me
But I don't know why
They can look good, too
If they quit hatin' and try
What's the point in envyin' me?
I ain't nobody
But Lil' Sey-Sey

-Lil' Sey-Sey U5

From The Beat: Maybe "they" do and maybe "they" don't. We're much more interested in what Sey-Sey wants and how she plans to move from here to there, than in what Sey-Sey thinks others are thinking. Concentrate on Sey-Sey, and maybe you won't have to keep coming back here putting up with haters. Word to the wise.

Can't Please Mama

It's been really hard to please my mama. I had to move out 'cause I couldn't please mama. She's a strong believer in God. I believe in God also, but I don't practice what I believe in. My mother is beautiful. So am I. My mother loves me. It's just we can't live together.

-Money C U6

From The Beat: We changed your title ("Amerikkka") because it had not relationship to what you wrote. But what you wrote we found quite interesting. What does it mean to "believe in God" but not to "practice what you believe"? That's called hypocrisy. How can you say you believe in something you don't follow? Sounds to us that your belief is really only words. That's what makes it so hard for your beautiful mother to accept. Time to examine that belief in God and ask yourself if it's true. If not, just say so. If it is true, time to live it.

Man

So you call yourself a man?
Well, be a man

-Lil' Valley LCRS

From The Beat: What is being a man?

My Appreciation To The Beat

I wanna thank The Beat for coming to the Ranch. The Beat makes time go by faster. I really appreciate Pauline for coming.

I want to wish everybody at The Beat a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year. I wish all my friends and family the same. I'm just thankful that we are all alive. I hope it will show on Christmas day and we have a fat diner at the Ranch. I would really appreciate it if my mom would come up to see me, because I haven't seen her for about a month.

-Weapon LCRS

From The Beat: You're so welcome. You know we're happy to come down to the Ranch and work with all of you each week who are serious about writing. We hope you had a beautiful dinner on Christmas and that your mom came to visit you. Best to you in 2007!

Life

Your life is like one, two, three plus zero
To four, five

No, you are posted up
Without no life

No wife

No money

No car

So make you' life go

Always to the six

To have a wife

And life

-Lil' Valley LCRS

From The Beat: Who is this poem written for or about? What is a 1 or 2 or 3 life? What do you mean by "make your life go always to the six?" How are you creating your life?

Chillin' Like A Villain

Young Jeff back at ya. I ain't going away. I'm at the Ranch, just chillin' like a villain and still reppin' my set. I'm about to make my level. I'm tryna go home.

My ninja Chill-Will just got out of here, so he out there doing his thang. I up here doin' my thang.

I be talking to my homies sometimes on Fridays. They ain't staying out the way, but they ready for whatever. The beef is getting hectic there. Man, if you beefin' out there and you survive the beef, then you a sick ninja, but until then, you ninjas better stay out the way, because when I get out, it's rice an' gravy.

-Young Jeff LCRS

From The Beat: Still repping and doing a ranch program. So you do your program, get out and fall back in the traps that brought you to the ranch in the first place? You have hood sickness and it's bad! Get help! Help yourself!

Love

We love

You love

They love you

But do you love yourself?

-Lil' Valley LCRS

From The Beat: Good question, so you love yourself?

They Know Everything About Me

One thing that they don't know is how, as a matter of fact, they know everything about me. So I ain't got nothing to write in this section.

-Pj U5

From The Beat: So, you're just an open book, eh? Nothing hidden, nothing unknown. Well then, we guess the fact that you're locked up tells us everything we need to know...

SANTA CRUZ

My Way Out

Well, the only way out for me is six feet deep. My carnales told me before I got jumped in that if I get in - there's no getting out. I told them I understood, and I got married to the barrio. I am now committed for life. So to those little homies out there - if this is what you want, you have to be ready to sacrifice your freedom, and if necessary, your life. So think about that. Alrato!

-So-called lifer

From The Beat: So, are you saying that the way to deal with a mistake is to commit yourself to more mistakes, forever? Who makes up bad rules like that? Why should you feel an obligation to promise allegiance to people who can't seem to tell the difference between doing what's right from what's wrong? It's never wrong to stop doing wrong. You must learn that there is nothing honorable about keeping a bad promise, a promise that's bad for you, bad for your family and bad for your community.

What's Cold

You want to know what's cold? What's cold is life. It's cold and deadly, with no expression. It will have you caught up in things you'll never expect to be caught up in. So watch out. It comes fast and hard, like a burning bullet.

-Skar

From The Beat: Hey, it's not always like that. And even when it's unpredictable, there are ways to make it sweeter rather than more sour. But we know you know that. Try thinking about everything you do. Make every act an intended act, an act you're sure you want to make. If it feels like it might be the wrong act to take, it may well be the wrong one. Keep thinking and stay focused. Doing so will make you a lot happier, and it will keep you on the other side of the bars.

What's Cold

What's cold? Well, this place and some of the staff here. They act like our life isn't hard enough and they want to try to make it harder by trippin' on little stuff that makes us happy - like having too many pictures, or books, or magazines. It doesn't bother them if we have 50 extra pictures, or books. They're just on a power trip, abusing their authority. But what can I do? Nothin' 'til I'm out.

-Big Dub

From The Beat: We can understand that you don't like the rules, but you've nailed the heart of the issue when you ask, and then answer your own question. Your job is to do what you need to do to get out as quickly as you can. And then behave in a way that never threatens your freedom again.

What's Cold

What's cold? This place because they need to put some heaters in our rooms. It's cold because it's winter. At least we should get some heavy gray blankets. But it's cool. I'll be out of here soon. I hope I don't get punked for my bunk.

-J

From The Beat: We hope so too.

Me Enamore De Alguién No Debido

Yo una vez me enamoré de mi prima cuando la vi por primera vez. Nunca la había visto porque ella vivía en Estados Unidos y yo en El Salvador.

From The Beat: Sabias que eso es incorrecto! No es bueno enamorarse de los miembros familiares. Va contra la moral, la religion y muchas cosas más.

I Fell In Love With Someone I Should Not Have

One time, I fell in love with my cousin when I saw her for the first time. I had never seen her before because she lived in the United States and I lived in El Salvador.

-Jose, Marin
From The Beat: You knew that that was not right! It is not good to fall in love with members of your own family. It is immoral, against religion, and many other things.

Lo Mejor Del Mundo (The Best Thing In The World)

What it do, Beat! This is your boy young, Tweety, once again. I don't know what to write about. I don't believe in love at first sight, but when I see a fine lady, I get fantasies porque hay jainas que me llaman mucho la atención (because there are females that definitely catch my attention). Creo que es lo que más me gusta de este mundo: Las jainas (I believe that this is what I like most in the world: Females). Creo que las Latinas son las mejores (I believe that the Latin females are the best). I used to holla at the jainas everyday. You know; at the same place: Mission, donde abundan las Latinas (where the Latin females are abundant). Es lo que más extraño de la calle (That is what I miss the most from the street).

I used to smoke trees y clavarme en el telefono hablando con diferentes morras cuando no tenía nada que hacer (and glue myself to the phone, talking with different females when I didn't have anything to do). Una vez cuando fumamos en el parque como a las 9 pm, pasaron unos vatos de otra pandilla (One time when we were smoking at the park like around 9:00 p.m., some dudes from the other gang passed by). "Paah!" "Pahh!" Tiraron dos valasos (They fired two shots). Afortunadamente, no le dio a nadie, pero se llevaron un gran susto que hasta uno de ellos confesó que era un set up, que nos usaron para poder cacharnos (Fortunately, they didn't hit anyone, but the people that I was with got so scared that one of them confessed that it was a set up, that they used us in order to catch us). Me entiendes (Do you understand me)! Desde ese entonces, no confío en ninguna (Ever since that moment, I don't trust no) female. Pueden ser (They can be) snitches o pueden meterte en problemas (or they can get you into problems). Mientras tanto seguiré diciendo que son lo mejor que hay en este mundo (Despite all this, I will continue saying that they are the best thing that there is in the world). Well, I gotta go.

-Young Tweety U6
From The Beat: En una parte te apoyamos con lo dicho, en lo que dices que las mujeres son lo mejor del mundo. Lo que te ha pasado a ti, es que te has estado metiendo con gente que no valen la pena, gente que te llebaran siempre al mismo olo, male or female. Tienes que buscar la manera como salirte de todo este mess que te has estado metiendo antes que salgas de un funeral con los piez adelante. Solo date cuenta que estubistes cerca de perder tu vida por algo que no vale la pena. Cuida lo que la vida te ha dado y esperamos que pienses en lo que te ha pasado y aprendas algo. La última cosa: No todas las mujeres son las mismas.

From The Beat: On one hand, we support what you said when you mention that women are the best thing in the world. What has happened to you is that you have been getting yourself involved with people that are not worth your time, people that will always lead you to the same pit, male or female. You have to find the way to get yourself out of this whole mess that you have gotten yourself into before you find yourself in a funeral with your legs laid out straight. Just realize that you were close to losing your life over something that's not worth losing your life over. Take care of what life has given you and we hope you think about what has happened to you and you learn something from it. The last thing: Not all women are the same.

I believe that in that aspect, I don't have to change much because thanks to God,
I don't have any drug habits.

Pase Lo Que Pase Se Terminó

Te extraño, pero no te amo. Sólo quiero mirarte porque me gusta. No te hablaré porque me lastimastes, pero no tripeo porque yo también jugué contigo. Si algún día quieres recordar viejos tiempos, pues recuérdalos pero nunca regresaré contigo. Eso tengo por seguro. Tú me cortastes y ahora te aguantas. Llores, grites, o rías, ya no estamos juntos. For real, pero te extraño.

From The Beat: Clase terminación tan dura amigo. Nos imaginamos que lo que esta muchacha te hizo, te dolio demaciado y podemos notar esto por la forma como le has dejado claro que no volveras con ella llore, grite o ria. Si se lo merece, pues que se lo merezca.

Regardless Of What Happens, It's Over

I miss you, but I don't love. I just want to see you because I like to see you. I'm not going to talk to you because you hurt me, but I'm not trippin' because I also played with you. If one day you want to relive old times, well, we'll reminisce on them, but I will never get back with you. That I know for sure. You cut me loose and now you have to put up with it. Cry, yell, or laugh, we're no longer together. For real, but I miss you.

-Tweety U7
From The Beat: That was some difficult break up, friend. We imagine what this girl did to you, hurt you a ton, and we can note this by the way you have clearly stated that you will not get back with her regardless if she cries, yells, or laughs. If she deserves it, well then, she deserves it.

Un Cambio

Cambiar para mí sería en la manera de manejar mi vida con más comportamiento, respeto y responsabilidad.

También sería tener un mejor futuro, y por supuesto, tratar que siempre de esquivar las drogas.

Creo que en eso no tengo mucho que cambiar por gracias a Dios, no tengo vicios que de drogas. Me parece que el 2006-2007 será diferente en muchas cosas. Pues hay que enfrentar nuevas metas. También hay que experimentar nuevas cosas.

Para mí esas sera la diferencia y talvez otras cosas que no puedo escribir.

From The Beat: Todos pasamos por la etapa en el cual tenemos que hacer un cambio bien grande y creemos que llego el tiempo en el cual tienes que hacer tu propios cambios. ¿Cuales son las metas que tienes pensado enfrentar? Deberias de tomar este tiempo para pensar en estas metas.

A Change

Change for me would be in the way I steer my life with more respect, better behavior, and responsibility.

It also would be having a better future, and of course, always try to avoid drugs.

I believe that in that aspect, I don't have to change much because thanks to God, I don't have any drug habits.

It appears to me that 2006-2007 will be different in many areas. Well, one has to confront new goals. Also, one has to experiment with new things.

For me, these will be the difference and maybe other things that I cannot write about.

-Marvin U6
From The Beat: We all go through the stage when we must make a big change and we believe that the time has come for you to make your own changes. What are the goals that you have planned on confronting? You should take this time to think about these goals.

La Independencia

La independencia para mí es no depender de nadie. Vivir solo, tener que trabajar para mí mismo, compreme la ropa con mi dinero, y vivir sin tener que pedirle a nadie.

From The Beat: ¿Has experimentado la independencia? ¿Alguna vez has trabajado duro para obtener lo que te gusta?

Independence

Independence for me is not depending on anyone. Living on your own, having to work for myself, buy my clothes with my money, and live without having to beg to no one.

-JV, Marin
From The Beat: Have you experienced independence? Have you ever worked hard to obtain what you like?

Esos Ojos

Cuando miro en tus ojos
A veces miro odio y tristeza

Y a veces,
Miro unos ojos que brilla de alegría
Dispuesta a hacer lo que sea por
Regalar tu amor a esta persona.

From The Beat: ¿Quien le da la tristeza y odio a esta persona? ¿Eres tú?

Those Eyes

When I look into your eyes
At times, I see hate and sadness
And other times,
I see eyes that sparkle with happiness
Ready and willing to do whatever it takes
To present your love to that person.

-Maniac, San Mateo
From The Beat: Who brings sadness and hate to that person? Is it you?

Mis Pensamientos

Siento que te he conocido en alguna parte que he ido, pero a lo mejor es un error porque pienso que somos mucho en el mundo y casi nos parecemos. Somos de carne y huesos y todos cometemos errores.

Gracias a Dios todo ha salido muy bien. Como quisiera recorrer todo el mundo porque quisiera conocer todos los países.

From The Beat: Todos nos podemos parecer, pero debajo de la piel somos diferente. Cada quien tiene diferente forma de pensar y actuar. ¿Como son tus formas? Esperamos que algún día llegues a conocer los países que puedas. Todo se puede en esta vida siempre y cuando tú lo desees.

My Thoughts

I feel like I have met you at some place that I have been to, but maybe it is a mistake because I think that we are many in the world and we almost look alike. We are made up of meat and bones and we all make mistakes.

Thanks to God, everything has come out very good. Oh how I would love to circumnavigate the whole world because I would like to get to know all the countries.

-Erivan, Santa Cruz
From The Beat: We can all look alike, but under the skin, we're all different. Each and every single one of us has a different way of thinking and acting. How are your ways? We hope that someday, you are able to get to know all the countries that you can. Everything is always possible in this life when you desire to make it happen.

Amor A Primera Vista

Yo tuve una novia y creo que no fue amor a primera vista porque terminamos luego. Creo que no era la chava que de verdad quería.

Ahora estoy saliendo con mi novia y pienso que la amo.

From The Beat: ¿Y estas cuidando a la mujer que piensas que amas? ¿Como?

Love At First Sight

I had a girlfriend and I believe that it was not love at first sight because we ended up breaking up. I believe that she was not the female that I truly loved.

Now I am going out with my girlfriend and I think I love her.

-Orlando, Marin
From The Beat: And are you taking care of the woman that you think you love? How?

Mi Perro

Yo tenía un perro que se llamaba Popi. Lo quería mucho porque era muy atento conmigo y paseaba conmigo. Un treinta de Diciembre un carro lo mato. Verlo muerto me hizo llorar y siempre lo recuerdo.

From The Beat: Sentimos mucho que tu perrito haya perdido la vida de esa manera. Estamos seguro que te debe de estar cuidando donde quiera que este. Por lo menos tú le hiciste la vida feliz.

My Dog

I had a dog whose name was "Popi." I loved him a lot because he was very attentive with me and he would go places with me. One 30th of December, a car killed him. Seeing him dead made me cry and I always remember him.

-Michael U6
From The Beat: We deeply regret that your dog lost his life the way he did. We're positive that he must be taking care of you wherever he may be. At least you made the life that he lived happy.

Como Será El Año 2007

Que onda? Soy Tazmania de El Salvador. Yo creo que el otro año va a estar gobernando y controlando los cinco países, El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, Mexico y los Estados Unidos.

From The Beat: ¿Gobernando qué?

How The Year 2007 Will Be

What's up? It's Tazmania from El Salvador. I believe that in the new year, the five countries of El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, Mexico, and the United States will be governing and controlling.

-Orlando, Marin
From The Beat: Governing what?

Por Mi Barrio

Hey que ondas, soy Soldado escribiendo de nuevo. Pues vamos a hablar un poco del amor ya que aquí no tememos amor ni compasión. Pues, yo creo que el amor a primera visto sí existe, pero nunca me ha pasado a mí.

Cuando empecé andar con mi novia, no la tomaba en serio, pero con el tiempo la empecé a querer bastante. Cuando estaba fuera no la supe valorar porque andaba con otras rucas. Cuando caí preso, me di cuenta que verdaderamente la quería. Ahora que quiero salir de aquí no puedo porque me meti en muchos problemas.

Lo único que quiero es que ella sea feliz y que haga su vida porque no sé cuando vaya a salir. Aunque saliera no sirviera de nada porque voy a regresar a mi bloque, me voy a seguir metiendo en problemas y voy a seguir cayendo preso. Es todo lo que puedo decir.

From The Beat: Tienes un buen corazón y lo pudimos observar en la manera como le deseas lo mejor a esa persona que tú quieres. Hay gente que estando preso, quieren retener a sus novias con cartitas de amor. Esas personas salen y después hacen lo mismo y las que quedan llorando son las novias. Pero al cambio tú, tú sabes que ella seguía sufriendo contigo y les desea lo mejor. En la otra mano, estas muy equivocado en la manera como estas viviendo tu vida. Estas dejando la vida por un barrio que te mete en problemas, que te esta quitando tu libertad, que te esta apartando y te ha apartado de las personas que tú quieres. Dinos solo una cosa, ¿Qué te ha dado el barrio que sea más importante que tu familia, tu novia, y tu libertad? Danos una respuesta que sea justa. ¿Puedes?

For My 'Hood

Hey, what's up? I'm "Soldado," writing once again. Well, we're going to talk a little bit about love since in here we don't have love or compassion. Well, I believe that love at first sight does exist, but it has never happened to me.

When I started going out with my girlfriend, I didn't take her seriously, but with time, I started to love her a lot. When I was on the outs, I didn't know how to value her because I was messing around with other females. When I got wrapped up, I realized that I truly did love her. Now that I want to get out of here, I can't because I got myself into lots of problems.

The only thing that I want is for her to be happy and to do something with her life because I don't know when I am going to be getting out. Even if I were to get out, it wouldn't matter because I am going to return to my block, I am going to continue to get myself into problems, and I am going to continue getting wrapped up. That's all I can say.

-Cruz, LCRS
From The Beat: You have a good heart and we were able to notice that by the way you wish nothing but the best for that person that you love. There are people that when they are locked up, they want to retain their girlfriends with love letters. Those people get out and then they do the same thing and the ones who are left crying are the girlfriends. However, you, you know that she will continue suffering with you and you wish her nothing but the best. On the other hand, you are very mistaken in the way you are living your life. You are leaving your life for a 'hood that gets you into problems, that is taking your freedom away from you, is separating you, and has separated, you from the people that you love. Just tell us one thing: What has the 'hood given you that is more important than your family, your girlfriend, and your freedom? Give us an answer that is just. Can you?

Lo Que Extraño

Extraño a mi familia y a mi carro
Mi novia y mi hija,
Extraño a mi bloque
Extraño a mi música de los ochentas
Extraño la comida de afuera
Extraño mi ropa, mi celular y mis zapatos
Extraño cuando iba a bailar con mi novia
Extraño el cine
Extraño a mi cama
Extraño a mi casa
Extraño la comida de mi mama
Extraño a mi trabajo
Extraño mi libertad
Extraño todo lo de afuera
Extraño mi libertad
Solo le pido a Dios que me de una oportunidad
Y volver a ver la luz del día.

From The Beat: ¿Entonces que esperas para recuperar las cosas que extrañas? Si estas en esta situación es porque tú así lo has decidido. ¿Qué es lo que tienes que hacer para recuperar lo tuyo?

What I Miss

I miss my family and my car
My girlfriend and my daughter
I miss my block
I miss my '80's music
I miss the food from the outs
I miss my clothes, my cellular, and my shoes
I miss when I would go dance with my girlfriend
I miss the movie theater
I miss my bed
I miss my home
I miss my mother's cooking
I miss my job
I miss my freedom
I miss everything from the outs
I just beg God to give me another opportunity
And see the light of the day again.

-Laye
From The Beat: So what are you waiting for to regain the things that you miss? If you are in this situation, it is because you decided for things to be like this. What is it that you have to do to regain what is yours?

Por Mis Amigos Y La Venta

Quiero contarles mi historia. Gracias a Dios tube una oportunidad de salir de este lugar para trabajar decentemente. Mis amigos me dijeron que vendiera droga que segun iba a ganar el dinero facil. Guise ayudar a mi hermano que estaba de cumpleaños.

Hoy quisiera acompañarlos para celebrar con mi familia, pero se encuentran muy lejos de este país. Algún día los volvere a ver sanos y salvos.

From The Beat: Esperamos que esto te sirva de experiencia para que busques la manera decente de siempre ganarte el dinero. Hay forma como ganarse el dinero facil pero legalmente. Cuando el dinero se gana ilegalmente, tienes que entender las consecuencias que vienen con el dinero mal venido. Esperamos y aprendas de esta lección.

For My Friends And The Hustle

I want to tell y'all a story. Thanks to God, I had an opportunity to get out of this place to work decently. My friends told me that I should sell drugs because, according to them, I was going to make easy money. I wanted to help my brother out because it was his birthday.

Today, I would like to join them so I could celebrate with my family, but they find themselves very far away from this country. Someday, I will see them again, healthy, and safe.

-Donadi U7
From The Beat: We hope that this experience shows you that you should always look for the way to make your money decently. There are ways to make money easily, but legally. When one makes his/her money illegally, you have to understand the consequences that come with the money made the wrong way. We hope that you learn from this lesson.

En Esta Vida

Pienso que de esta vida ya no podemos salir porque la vida que vivimos es una vida loca. Es como dice el dicho: "Hay entrada, no salida para esta vida de malandro." Si vas a vivir tienes que vivir una vida loca.

From The Beat: Te equivocas; la salida siempre esta, pero que no hay es ganas de salirse de la trampa. Si sigues pensando de esa manera vas a llegar muy lejos pero en direccion opuesta.

In This Life

I think that we no longer can get out of this life because the life that we live is a crazy life. It is like the saying goes: "There's a way in, no way out from this wicked life." If you're going to live, you have to live a crazy life.

-LL, Marin
From The Beat: You're mistaken; the way out is always there, but what is not there is the urge to get out of the trap. If you continue thinking that way, you're going to go a long way, but in the opposite direction.

Fue Un Accidente

Mi mama me acusa de haber robado mi propia casa, pero le digo que eso es mentira. No me quiere creer y discutimos, entonces me pego en mi nariz y luego la agarre de las manos y creo que por accidente le pegue con la mano abierta. No fue mi intención pegarle. Luego agarro el celular y marco a la policia. Yo corri para afuera y me fui de la casa a la casa de mi amiga. La policia llego y me arresto porque mi mama me puso cargos de haberle pegado. No fue mi intención. Todo fue porque alguien se robo las cosas de mi mama y mi ropa también. Ella me culpa a mí y yo le digo que yo no fui.

From The Beat: ¿Haberla agarrado de las mano y averle pegado con la manos abiertas, crees que eso sea accidente? ¿No crees que eso es demaciada coincidencia? Deberias de estar arrepentido por lo que supuestamente no hicistes. Si tu madre llego hasta llamarla a la policia fue por un gran motivo. Si en verdad no eres culpable de las cosas que se perdieron, todo se debiera aclarar algún dia. Recuerda que el que no la debe no la teme. Por el momento deberias de trabajar en lograr el perdón de tu madre que es lo más importante en este mundo. Recuerda que ella te dio la vida y mucho más.

It Was An Accident

My mother accuses me of having stolen from my own house, but I tell her that that is a lie. She doesn't want to believe me and we argue, so she hit me on my nose and then I grabbed her by her hands and I believe I hit her by accident with an open hand. It wasn't my intention to hit her. Then, she grabbed the cellular and she called the police.

I ran outside and I left from the house to my female friend's house. The police came and arrested me because my mother charged me with having hit her. It wasn't my intention. This all happened because someone stole my mother's things and my clothes, as well. She blames me and I tell her that it wasn't me.

-Gadiel, 150 Crew
From The Beat: Grabbing her by the hands and hitting her with an open hand, do you believe that that was an accident? Don't you believe that that is way too much of a coincidence? You should be remorseful for what you supposedly didn't do. If your mother reached the point that she called the police, it was because there was a huge motive for her to do so. If you truly are not to blame for the things that were lost, everything will be cleared up someday. Remember: One, who is innocent has nothing to fear. For the meantime, you should work hard to win the forgiveness from your mother, who is the most important thing that there is in the world. Remember that she is the one who gave you life and much more.

Yo Me Siento Mal

Yo me siento mal al ver que las personas me quieren ayudar no los aprecio. Yo creo que algo que haria que cambiara seria que me dieran otra oportunidad para estar con mis padres otra vez. Estan desconectados de mi vida.

Yo no soy malo ni nada de eso. Soy bueno y amigable con todos y me siento muy mal ahora aqui sin mi familia y mis padres. Estoy deprimido y quiero regresar otra vez a casa, porfavor.

Yo he desaprovechado todas las oportunidades que me han dado de portarme bien para no meterme en problemas. He perdido todas mis cosas que aprecio para estar peor. Yo quisiera que me dieran otra oportunidad para estar aca y valorar mis cosas y los consejos de mis padres.

From The Beat: Esperamos que te otorguen esa oportunidad que tanto quieres para que puedas hacer las cosas que necesitas hacer para recuperar todo lo que has perdido. De las experiencias aprendemos y atravez de lo que nos escribes podemos observar que has aprendido una gran lección. Oportunidades vas a tener muchas sea aqui o en cualquier otro lugar. Esperamos y sepas aprovechar las que siguen.

I Feel Bad

I feel bad when I see that people want to help me, but I don't appreciate them. I believe that something that would make me change is if they were to give me another opportunity to be with my parents again. They are disconnected from my life.

I am not bad or any of that. I am good and friendly with everyone and I feel bad right now in here without my family and my parents. I am depressed and I want to go back to my home, please.

I have not taken advantage of all the opportunities that they have give me to behave myself so I won't get myself into problems. I have lost all the things that I value to be worse of. I would like if they would give me another opportunity to be here and value my things and the advice of my parents.

-David U4
From The Beat: We hope that they grant you that opportunity that you so desire so that you can do the things that you need to do to recover everything that you have lost. We learn from our experiences and based on what you have written to us, we can tell that you have learned a big lesson. You're going to have lots of opportunities be it here or in any other place. We hope that you know how to take advantage of the opportunities that come you way in the future.

Mi Libertad

En mi persona, yo creo que la libertad es importante. Estoy dispuesto a recuperar mi libertad portandome bien y haciendo lo que me dicen, no hacer lo que yo estaba haciendo, buscar como trabajar, ser responsable con mi obligaciones, y respetando a los demás. En pocas palabras, siendo la persona que debemos todos ser, siendo correctos o tratar de serlo.

From The Beat: Estamos deacuerdo con tus planes y esperamos que los llebes acabo. ¿Estas dispuesto a ser esa persona correcta que dices que quieres ser? "Si se puede."

My Freedom

In my world, I believe that freedom is important. I am ready and willing to recover my freedom by behaving myself and doing what I am told to do, not doing what I used to do, start looking to work, be responsible with my obligations, and respecting others. In other words, being the person we should all be: Being righteous or trying to be it.

-Marvin, B4
From The Beat: We agree with your plans and we hope that you see them through. Are you ready and willing to be that righteous person that you say you want to be? "Yes, you can do it."

Para Los Jóvenes

Yo pido que los jóvenes no se metan en cosas malas de la vida. Para la gente que no ha probado la prison les digo que la libertad es lo más bello de la vida.

From The Beat: Esperamos que sigan tu consejo al igual que tú también. ¿Dinos que fue lo que te hizo escribir esto?

For The Young People

I beg that the young people don't get themselves involved in the bad things in life. For the people that have not had a taste of prison, I'm telling y'all that freedom is the most beautiful thing in life.

-Marin, B4
From The Beat: We hope that they, and you as well, follow your words of advice. Tell us: What made you write this?

Una Vez Me Enamoré

Una vez me enamoré de una chica que solo me rompio el corazón. Fue porque no supe apreciar su amor y me dejo. Despues me di cuenta que Jonny andaba con ella.

From The Beat: Entonces tú le rompistes el corazón a ella, no ella a ti. ¿Que esperabas: Que te aguantara todo lo que le has hecho?

One Time, I Fell In Love

One time, I fell in love with a girl that just broke my heart. It was because I didn't know how to appreciate her love and she left me. Later on, I found out that Jonny was going out with her.

-Anonymous, Marin
From The Beat: So you broke her heart, not the other way around. What were you waiting for: For her to put up with everything that you have done to her?

¡Soy Latino Y Que!

Que ondas compas? Pues aqui aguitado estoy en mi cuarto porque una señora que trabaja en las mañanas me dio una hora sin saber porque y me borro mi nombre de la lista y no puedo trabajar.

Saben compas? Es duro estar aqui porque soy Latino. Me quieren tratar como basura. ¿Pero que puedo hacer? Nada! Aunque tú le expliques, ellos siempre tratan de sacar una excusa, pero a mí me vale madre. Voy a hacer 100 por ciento Latino por vida. Hasta la otra.

From The Beat: ¿Por qué crees que te dieron una hora? ¿Que hicistes mal? A lo mejor hicistes algo no debido y te dieron el castigo que te merecias. ¿Que crees que fue? Es verdad, el orgullo de ser lo que eres nadie te lo puede quitar. ¿Si eres tan orgulloso de lo que eres, porque no buscas la manera en demostrar que los Latinos pueden salir adelante y evitar de empañar la forma como la gente ven a los Latinos por los errores que estan cometiendo?

I'm Latin And What!

What's up bros? Well, I am here in my room feeling sad because a lady that worked in the mornings, without knowing, gave me an hour because and she erased my name from the list and I can't work.

Y'all know what, bros? It is hard being in here because I am Latin. They want to treat me like garbage. But what can I do? Nothing! Even if you explain to them, they always try to come out with an excuse, but I don't give a damn. I'm going to be a 100% Latin for life. Until the next one.

-Laey
From The Beat: Why do you believe that they gave you an hour? What did you do wrong? You probably did something that you shouldn't have, and they gave you the punishment that you deserved. What do you believe it was? It's true; nobody can take away from you the pride of being who you are. If you are so proud of what you are, why don't you look for the way to demonstrate that Latinos can come out ahead and avoid tarnishing the way people view Latinos because of the mistakes that y'all are making?

MICHAEL CABRAL

We wish every child who reads these words would understand what Michael Cabral — so recently a child himself — describes so powerfully here in this stark poem, the brutal reality of prison life. We know he wishes that he had understood — truly understood — what lay ahead before that fateful day when he acted... and through his actions, ended one life, and his own youth. The life he must now adjust to has made him grow suddenly into manhood, and in this new, frightening reality, he reaches out in desperate hope that maybe one of you will benefit from what he — and the other 200,000 human beings imprisoned in California — must endure daily, a cold world of loss, of fear, of death, of lies... and of hope slipping away day by day. Mr. Cabral writes from his cell at Pelican Bay State Prison.

It's A Mess Around Here...

Nothing comes free 'round here
Taking a life for nothing
Cost me at least 16 years
Of living in fear, confusion
With false bravado policies
Where freedom is fiend for
Even if it means poverty
Rather be shoeless and clueless
About the foolishness of prison
Than rich and going through with
All the bull that I live in
Fist fights and riots
With razors and knives
Surrounded by razor wires
Racists and liars
Names are expired
I'm just a faceless last-two
Where "manhood" is measured
By how faded your tattoo is
And so many hypocrites
Fascinated by the truth
Quick to tell you to stay strong
Before they're hanging from a noose
Found in a cell
With a note wrote to mom
'Cause when faith dies, fate arrives
And hope is gone
But life goes on
All emotions suppressed

You stay smiling at the world
Even though you're depressed...

It's a mess around here...
It's a mess around here...

It's a mess up in this pit
Where youth is a weakness
So we grow up quick
With nicknames, fake friends
Yet claiming to keep it real
Until the game is all you know
And you can't trust yourself
Where turning to one
Exposes your back to another
Because here death and survival
Are like passionate lovers
Paralyzed by the deafening
Roar of their blindness
All they know is each other
Lost without one another
And in here giving in
And giving up
Both mean success
With your friends and whatnot
High-fiving your homeboys
But you're sick and you're lost
Because your feelings aren't yours
Your soul is shot
You're getting props for heart
As you grow more heartless
Trying to feel hard

But you're running from hardships
Nothing to look forward to
The past is dead
So you get lost in every moment
And just imagine it ending...

It's a mess around here...
It's a mess around here...

It's all part of the disease
Learning to live with the smell
Of blood, urine and feces
Can't see freedom out the window
So you stare at the TV
To catch thirty-second glimpses
Of how life should be
But actually
You're an emotional wreck
Wearing a mean mug
Trying to hold it in check
Because respect only comes
From what you have to give
So you sacrifice your life
Because you have to live
Sad 'cause you have kids
But now the pen is your family
Writing letters to the streets
Pretending to be a real daddy
Wishing you could live life
As if your children were watching
But it's hard to keep your mind
The way these inmates be talking
It's so provocative never knowing
Which ones will keep their promises
So you snap at every word
And hope that no one ever talks again
But when it's quiet
You're scared to death of the silence
And realize that where you live
Isn't fit to die in...

ADRIAN

This next writer gives us something to think about as he pushes the idea that there isn't only a God, but also a Goddess, and to ignore that fact is wrong of people. He gives specific reasons why he believes this and he also quotes the bible a few times. We can tell he's done his homework, so many of us are convinced he at least has something to go on. But we may be wrong, however, one thing's for sure, and that's it is his opinion and we respect his courage for expressing it. He's writing from Calipatria State Prison in Calipatria, CA, and we appreciate his thoughts.

Untitled

In the beginning, God created the heavens and the Earth.
Or so we have been told.
But perhaps God created the heavens and Goddess created the Earth, If I may be so bold.
We are all familiar with the terms
Mother Nature and Mother Earth.
I just thought I'd mention that to you
For what it's worth.
According to the Bible, both Adam and Eve
Took part in eating the forbidden fruit.
Yet woman was placed under man's authority.
Now if that were the case wouldn't that seem
That they were not both judged equally?
Who took the first bite of the apple is of no consequence.
Just think about it logically and use common sense.
And have you ever stopped to ask yourself
Why is it that God is always referred to as He?
Is that why they call it His-story could it possibly be?
If God was a man one ruler supreme
Then why was for Adam created a queen?
There would be no use for women at all.
Just reason and logic and then you make the call.

Genesis 1:26 says "And God said, let us make man in our image, well for that I have just one question for you when God said us

and our who was he referring to?

Genesis 2:24 says and then God said "for this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother and they shall be become one. So therefore the God/Goddess theory still adds up and equals the same about Sum.

Am I implying that God and Goddess must be married? Of course I am, why wouldn't they be? It only stands to reason that they would of course set the first supreme example and go by the same rules applied to you and me. If God were a man alone then that would mean that everything would be judged, perceived, and looked at strictly from a man's point of view. Now you tell me, does that sound like a fair and just God to you. Of course, it doesn't and it should no longer be "denied" Gods other half has been a victim of Biblical matricide. Math is logic and logic is math once we add Goddess to our higher power equation then we will be on the right path. Just picture a clearer picture for you. Equality and balance cannot be reached with one but with two why would God create Eve for Adam without first creating for himself a mate. The power of logic and reason is something one should not be overlooked or underestimated. Do you think God would live eternally without a mate when he of course had a choice? Just open up your eyes of reason and listen to logic's voice.

It is not good for man to be alone God said Genesis 2, verse 18, I'm sure he did say that for he knew this first hand and already had for himself a queen and a kingdom without both a king and a queen is a kingdom that is not whole

We've been kept in the dark long enough so let the truth now be told. John 8:32 says, know the truth and the truth shall set you free. I simply speak with logic and reason. No this is not blasphemy.

We are often referred to as God's children, and the natural order of things teaches us that for the best results children should be raised by both parents. Not one or the other. Our heavenly father has been recognized so why not our earth mother.

The Beat Within where all you
need is a pen,

To scribble down all your feelings, dreams, hopes, fantasies
Lies and sins

No Second Chance

I come from a long line of convicts I won't be
The first that's gonna die here. I hope to break
The cycle and I'll be the last so none of my nephews
and cousins

Have to suffer this fate!
It's not fly, cool, active or gangsta doing forever in the
pen!

I had so many chances but I slid 'em to the side,
Jumping in stolen cars with load clips smilin' lovin' to
go ride

I did so much dirt I'm still scrubbin' it away,
But I must be honest and real with you
Young homies, I'm still doing dirt today!

I strive to be humble and respect every man
But some time this "turnkey's" get out of hand
I wish I could walk away from this game we play
But walkin' takes strength and that type of courage

I could never display
I give it too real and uncut the only
Way I know how to give,

If you got a chance to change yo' life
You better take it like Eminem said!

I lost the most precious gift God gave
"Freedom to every man"

I'll neva walk amongst the free for me there is
No second chance!

I say all that to tell y'all,

This, "Keep it real to yo' self"

And yes love and always remember

Where you came from,

But you ain't got to stay there lil' homies,

Get out! Go 'head... run!!

JACK We really wanted to publish all of this next writer's pieces but one of them held too much glorification of gangs and violence. The Beat Within has been successful because we try to keep the publication as a medium to teach and we've had to be careful with what we publish for there are mostly young people reading this. The other two poems were outstanding so here they are. In the first he speaks about having 'no second chance.' And in the second he gives a wonderful tribute to The Beat Within and what it means to him. Great writing from what we know is probably even a greater person. He's writing from Corcoran State Prison in Corcoran, CA.

The Beat Within

The Beat Within is a godsend to the lost and forgotten,
An open space and a friendly place to purge and cleanse
our souls.

The Beat Within I can't wait to see what my fellow taken
away

And displaced have to say
Show shhh so sad but it makes me glad
To see they found a way to release!

The Beat Within such a beautiful friend
Knocking down these walls again.
She so strong she'll carry us all to a place
Where there's no gang violence or racial riots.

The Beat Within where all you
need is a pen,
To scribble down all your feelings, dreams, hopes,
fantasies
Lies and sins!

The Beat Within she keep it
Poppin' young homies it's like
"Thug Mansions" for us livin'
Livin' in the pen down to the halls, Y-A
Camp and placement too!
The Beat Within
Keep doin' yo' do!!!

RONNIE MOODY It's nice to see people taking salvation in a higher power because then that means they recognize there's something greater than themselves out there. So often we put ourselves in unfortunate situations because we're not thinking of the bigger picture and instead are looking at the world through concentrated lenses. Feeding our spirituality is essential in surviving, in overcoming, and most importantly in having hope that one day soon things will get better. He's writing from Corcoran State Prison in Corcoran, CA., but once upon a time this writer too was a participant in our writing workshops in San Francisco's Youth Guidance Center.

Testimony Of God

I'm 24 years old and in prison. I was born and raised in San Francisco California, Fillmore district projects. Like a stormy sea, my youth was rough, my mother drifted away into the depths of cancer and there was no calm after the storm, the floods of drugs addiction came and consumed my father. He was washed away, strung-out unable to see me. Like a distant ship lost in the fog. All was gone.

As I drifted through my childhood, I was the first of my siblings to discover God. One Sunday I went to church, I lived with my grandmother in the Hunters Point. At age 7 I received the lord into my life. And I was baptized with my sister Diwonda and brother Tawon. I remember when I returned home to live with my mother in the Westside projects. While dying of cancer, my mother continued using drugs. During that time, I began my own addictions and self destructive life style, by running the streets, pulling all nighters, hanging out with the wrong crowd and experimenting with drugs like weed, cocaine, drinking hard liquor.

Eventually I was arrested for a lot of petty crimes, and I was in and out of YGC juvenile halls, group homes, and

other institutions. Finally I would run back to the Westside projects, my comfort zone, once again I chose to commit more crimes, stealing mo-peds, cars high-speed chases, going up to total strangers robbing them, on the spot also I robbed stores, was a small time hustler used and sold drugs and manipulated women. As a result of my actions, I spent most of my youth running from God and the system and being incarcerated, and I'm currently serving a 6 year sentence. As a result, I am burdened with 2 strikes while appealing charges for a crime I did not commit. Until recently I rebelled against God, and I blamed him for the death of my parents. As my heart hardened, I rebelled against a world I knew God had built, yet I failed to understand the truth causing me to live in denial the unrest that grew inside me aided in my self destructive behavior and life style.

I know now that God rescued me from myself, by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, and I decided to be baptized again, knowing that in my youth, I was too young to appreciate and understand the importance of my salvation in Jesus Christ. I believe this whole experience has brought me closer to God than I've ever been. The evil other people meant towards me God used for good! To save me from myself and bring me closer to him, I firmly believe that God in control of everything and "all things work together for the good to those who love God and are his children called according to his purpose! (Romans 8:28).

Since then I have completed the 40 days purpose driven life program, and my rededication to the lord has helped me to understand my purpose in life which is to know and love god and during these three years I've been incarcerated I have helped to lead others to church and to Jesus Christ.

A parents worst nightmare is to live to see a child die, I know its worse to die without the spirits of Jesus Christ.

MIZZ This next young writer is really a diamond in the ruff. Her heart is amazing and bleeds through her words. She was a writer with the 150 crew (Alameda County Juvenile Hall) that continually amazed us and made our jaws drop with wonder. We're running her writings in The Beat Without section because we enjoy her so much. She writes a poem to a long lost love, a letter to her sister, a letter to her man who died and left her to truly miss him, and then closes with a piece to all girls who sell their bodies. We would love to hear more from her, but we don't know if we will. She has touched us in many ways and we know she will touch you too.

My Mother (My Best Friend)

My mother, who gave her life up for me, who I will always love, who took care of me and showed me the ropes in life. I am so thankful for my mother who took me to school and brought everything I had in my life.

My mother, who for the last couple of years, I have hurt with pain since the beginning of my teenage years, mom I'm so sorry hopefully this will be the last time you have to see me in this pink tee and blue jeans outfit and once again see me in my Baby Phat pants and earrings.

I appreciate everything you have done for me and I mean it and I'm sorry do you accept my apology. But I won't ever forget you were the one there for me through thick and thin. I'm 16 now, and its time to wake up and realize.

My mother, who for the last couple of years, I have hurt with pain since the beginning of my teenage years, mom I'm so sorry hopefully this will be the last time you have to see me in this pink tee and blue jeans outfit...

The Way You Do Things

The way you make me laugh
The way you make me smile
The way you make me sweat
The way you make me breath
The way you make me wet
The way you make me shiver
The way you make me shake
The way you lick me
The way you bite me
The way you make me feel like in heaven
The way you look at me
The way you talk to me with respect
The way you fulfill my fantasy
The way you treat me like a queen
The way you care for me
The way you act
The way you love me physically and mentally
The way you do things

You the one I wanted always in my life and I found and have you. I'm so blessed and thankful. I love you.

Dear Aaliyah (My Sister)

Dear Aaliyah,

Hi baby girl. It is March 18, 2006. 8 more days until my sweet sixteen and I'm sittin' here wishing for my b-day I could go back way in my past before I started messing up and caused you so much pain and be able to be the big sister you want and need. It's been over a year since I been with you going off to group home that aint so good that got me in this place time and time again.

I'm so sorry I haven't had the time to be there for you like your graduations and to be home when you get out of school and tell me everything and unable to help you with your work. Aaliyah will you please forgive my apology I am so sorry. I love you and things are going to change love you always, your sis.

Dear Johnny

Dear Johnny,

It has almost been 2 years since I seen you get murder and which I still see that night in my head of what. Since then your baby girl hasn't been the same, I have went insane and smoked and did too many drugs, the brain is almost fried like the chicken you used to cook.

Johnny, my baby boy, I got drug away and left you laying there in pain. In my head I sit here and see you and how sexy you are. That night we left to go to Safeway and got something to eat and some alcohol with our patnas and just wanted to go back home and have a good time like we used to do which we never got to do. Since then I see you laying there with that Rocawear shirt on and the most blood I ever seen in my whole life and couldn't believe it was all on you, the boy who I love and lost my virginity to. Your smile, your style and everything about you I love. I would not ever forget the days we had together like walkin the piers everyday and the great little get-togethers we had and our home that we lived like fame.

But most of all, can't forget that night you were there, couldn't talk and looking stuck and confused and me covered with your blood on my face and clothing and my hands and my tears coming down my eyes and wondering why and didn't believe this was real and only happened only in movies. What a fool I am. The guys who got you with who did this to you baby boy I wish I knew and could have them in jail for murder of you my love and wish they could see the pain and the insanity I go through Johnny.

Baby boy, I am so messed up I have did suicide things as you see it didn't work. Also ended up in a mental institution and on medication which don't help but I still can't go and be in big places and especially don't trust people like I used to boo. Every time I have had to go to the city and I look at all the man and young boys and wonder if one of them did this to you. And I wonder why? And why they are cowards to take a human life of stupid reasons and you baby who wasn't doing anything wrong just tryna live life and make that money to take care of us and your son.

Yes, I been worried. I knew you were in the drug game and things go wrong sometimes and took that chance which I'm happy I did and would not ever take that back. Baby boy, I'm sure you have been watching over me and seen that I have been in and out of juvenile hall and a group home. I was sent to Oakland and the drugs I did and the fights I got into and the panic attacks and the hospital situation and moved on from being bisexual to a lesbian because I lost interest of all males and can't see my life with another one.

But baby boy I'm going to end this letter in a good note and just say I wish we could be together everyday and me waiting for you to get home from your late night hustle and the days we spent at the piers and living our happy life with your son and the family we were and type everybody dreamed about even though we were under age of 18. We were on big things living large in the penthouse suite in the city. Baby well, I love you and would do anything to see you happy knowing your watching over me.

Love always,

Females Of The Night

To all my females out there doing what they do on the streets and internet, you know what I mean. I hear y'all (you all) talking likes it's the thing to be and to do but here's some advice to you from me. I might have never had been in that situation or been by that life style but **WOMEN HAVE RESPECT...** Think about it and ask yourself why? All day I hear pimp this, trick that trick daddy this, daddy that, and how much y'all (you all) make for him.

Come on now, why in the first place, in your right mind, would you tell your business, do that to yourself and act like there ain't nothing wrong wit' what you are doing? Also, I hear these females talk about how their so called pimp loves them or you're his main girl (bottom b___) and he loves you not the other ones. Let me tell y'all something. First off, if some guys allows you to sleep wit' many unknown guys he doesn't love you. If he takes your money and doesn't do to thang to earn it he doesn't love you. If he especially got other females he doesn't love you 'cause if that was the case you would be the only one not no main girl.

Also, how do you allow him to beat you for many reasons like low money, this or that he doesn't love you. If a man also allows you to degrade yourself wearing nasty, tight, short, out of pocket clothes he doesn't love you. Just think about it I'm for real. Also, especially think about how he can let you put yourself in life or death situations. He doesn't love you get it through your mind. I can tell you I lived in Oakland in a group home and had seen many females quick leave and go back to the street and be wit' some man

MARK Sometimes when we write we just let the pen flow freely as a way to keep a train of thought going. When we do this, we can come up with some really great pieces. Mark is an example of this because you can tell he's writing straight from the heart. He's explaining his views on mainly incarceration and how it's effected him. But he does so with an insight that's amazing. We really enjoyed it. He's writing from the Gus Harrison Correctional Facility in Adrian, Mississippi, and only time will tell if we here from him again.

Free As A Bird

There's a place up in heaven
Where the people are free
Living is wonderful,
They don't have to cry, there is no tragedy,
As I look at the world,
The streets are cold as ice,
No love to be found, all around you is grief
Nobody knows what to do
Living in the ghetto you wake
Up to the morning blues,
What's going to happen to your soul?
Nothing seems to be real, it's time to
Take a trip, before I go insane,
Gots to survive all the pain.
Waiting on the sunshine to
Brighten my day
The world is full of problems
Why don't they free the Black man today?
We live alone in a prison and
Nobody care if we live or
Die, the prisoners cries out
For justice. As the police kills
Me out in the streets, love
Is no where to be found
I shed my blood fighting war
For the American dream, then
I'm treated like a slave
I want to fly way up
To the sky way where I can
Find hope for a brighter day
As I search the world for
Love, darkness everywhere I go
I'm drowning in my tears, when
Will I see the sunshine, how
Long can I survive this insanity
Nothing exists around here but
Poverty and babies dying, I got
To get away from here, where
I'm as free as a bird.

MIZZ (CONT.)

and treat him like a king while you are a peasant and they choose to do what they do all because some ninja tells them he loves them and he cares and so on everything they want to hear.

Think about also your health, your body, your looks and much more. Females we should be ruling the world not getting ruled. I have seen the most beautiful girls out there, which they can have more to life than doing what they do and 'cause that ninja who got game. Ladies, it's 2006, you're a Queen, you should be treated like royalty, get some respect, step your game up, don't let that ninja play you anymore. I'm serious, this is from my heart not from some o' hatin' shhh. Live your life, live to a be a hundred years old, have your diploma and have a REAL job with a check stub, get married, have fun, have kids, whatever else then what you do now.

All I ask y'all to do is think about it, clothes, hair, nails cares, phones, is not important like that you know. Which someone told me "Life is going to be hard sometimes but don't give up and don't go out the easy way. Be able to live life."

Lastly, one more question to think about. Do you think if you were dead he would care and stop what he do? No he would move on to the next I'm sure he loves what you have in your pants, the goodies you give to people to get money NOT YOU.

If a man also allows you to degrade yourself wearing nasty, tight, short, out of pocket clothes he doesn't love you.

GARRETT Watch out... we have another new writer on the scene and it looks like he's very talented. He writes a poem about one of the hardest hitting and newest drugs — Meth. We've seen people who are addicted to it and they've got missing teeth, their bodies become depressingly skinny, and their faces are sunk in like we've never seen before. It almost looks like a Michael Jackson Thriller video gone all the way bad. He's writing from the Bar-O Boys Ranch in Gasquet, CA, and we can't wait to get more creative poems like this one.

Meth

It will torture you 'till the end,
It will make you lie, steal, and cheat on all your friends.
It has the power to make you rise and fall
It will destroy your family, your friends and all

You won't realize it 'till it's too late
'cause you believe that the feeling it brings is truly great
You will die and your memories will cease
Your family and friends will remember you as a beast

For all the pain you cause
They cannot dwell
Because you are dead and probably in hell

There is no more you
There is no more life
You gave it up when you were hitting the pipe
You saw what was coming
But you didn't believe
You probably said that won't happen to me

But you were wrong and the drug was right
You were alive that morning and dead that night.

TRACIE BENARDI Wow... there's not much we can say that would fully describe the following pieces sent to us from a Connecticut Correctional Facility in Niantic, CT. The first is a bit of an autobiography outlining why it's not good to seek love from a gang. She's been through hella harsh experiences starting at a very young age so people could learn a thing or two from her. At least now she's giving back by sharing those experiences with us though we know it must be painful to write about. Then she hits us with a few incredible poems and shows us how talented she really is. We love her writing and really hope we hear from her soon. She's touched our hearts and we want her to reach out and touch us again.

Never Seek Love In A Gang Because You'll Never Find it

I don't have childhood memories of playing with dolls or playing catch with dad in the park. I only remember when I used to hear dishes smashing, my mother's cries and I could still hear the echoes of her screams for help. I couldn't help, not even when he raped her at knifepoint. I must have weighed 40 pounds at the time; I was only about four or five years old. Being so tiny-all I could I was sit at the top of the steps and silently watch in horror, wishing my daddy would stop. When it was finally over I would try to forget but like a record that skips it replayed over and over again in my mind.

I'm now 24 years old, I had just turned nineteen at the time I was arrested, I've spent the last five and a half years in jail for a gang related murder. It is now 1998 and I've barely begun serving a thirty year sentence, without any hope of parole.

My release is in the year of 2017. What led me to join the gang? Well, I was a young girl in a lot of pain of wanting a "real" family. My mother was in and out of prison from the time I was nine until the age of seventeen. I had rarely seen her. She had chosen drugs over her children. My brother and sister were sent to live with their alcoholic father and I stayed with my alcoholic father. I was literally torn away from my brother and sister. I ran wild until my father began attending Alcoholics Anonymous meetings and began on the road to sobriety. My dad had finally stopped drinking.

He remarried to a woman who had three children from her previous marriage. I felt unloved, unwanted, and out of place. My father became someone I was not familiar with. He began to abuse me physically to discipline me. I think he was trying to impress his new wife and I wasn't helping by rebelling. My father suddenly developed selective amnesia, he only wanted to remember what he chose to recall but I couldn't forget. I couldn't just take an eraser and remove all the chaos and violence I had witnessed when my father was till an alcoholic.

I resented my stepmother because she shattered all hopes of my mother and father reconciling. I resented her because I felt my father was trying to replace my estranged family. She wanted me to call her mom and she resented me because I wouldn't. I told her that I had a mother and didn't want to call her anything other than her name. She was so jealous of the love I still felt for my mother. My mother wasn't dead and I wasn't going to pretend she was. So my stepmother made it a point to drill it into my head that my mother was no good, that my mother loved her drugs more than she loved me. She said I was going to turn out just like my mother. As if the verbal abuse wasn't enough, both she and my father used anything as an excuse to beat on me. If they were to hear me now they'd claim I was exaggerating and it was all in my head, (a perfect example of their selective memories). They are perfect and the rest of the world is dysfunctional.

Eventually, life with them became unbearable and at age 17 I finally had the courage to leave home. I ended up moving from place to place. Sleeping with a lot of boys in hope they would love me and stick around but to no avail, they never did. I was almost 18 by this point. I drank, smoked weed, and was a recreational cocaine user.

I had a fake ID and I used to go to bars and try to drink my memories away. Well, low and behold my trusty fake ID finally failed me. A bartender confiscated it and asked me to exit his establishment. So my friends left. One of them suggested we stop by this party her boyfriend was at. That

was where I met my first gang member boyfriend. He and I became romantically involved. I was so desperate for love I moved in with him in a matter of days. He cheated on me the whole time but it took me awhile to realize it. I reacted in the most negative way. I sliced my left wrist with a straight razor. Blood gushed everywhere. I remember begging the ambulance paramedics to just let me die. Well, to no avail. I didn't die instead I ended up in a psychiatric ward at the local hospital.

Since I wasn't 18 yet, the only way I could have gotten released from Grandview was to have an adult sign for me. My father was too embarrassed and worried about me damaging the family name. My mother had been released from prison for what would be the last time. She found out where I was and immediately rushed to my rescue. She signed for my release and I went home with her. She let me do whatever I felt like doing with no restrictions because she was too busy trying to support her drug habit, prostitution, sales of drugs, stealing, etc...

Where there was a will there was a way. I'd watch my mother get into tricks cars, I watched my mother go through physical withdrawal when she didn't have money for drugs. I watched her walking back to our one room apartment after having been beaten, bitten and raped by a psycho customer. I tried to be away as much as I could. I still hung around my new found gang friends. I saw the family oriented image that the gang portrayed for outsiders to become insiders. I was in such tremendous emotional pain of wanting to be loved and expected that I allowed myself to be deceived from the reality of the gang. I joined! They all welcomed me in a gave me the special handshakes and initiation and now I had to prove myself. I was the only white girl; the rest of the gang was purely Puerto Rican. They automatically underestimated me and summed that I was a punk because of my skin color. I began fighting anyone and everyone who crossed my path. I may have been a little, at 120 lb, 5'3 but I had so much rage inside of me that I never lost a fight. The craziest thing is that I'd black out.

I guess, I've witnessed too much violence in my life for my brain to take. Blacking out was type of dealing mechanism for me. Everytime I'd finally being to feel accepted, do something wrong and as punishment I'd be subject to a bounce. A bounce is when you stand in the middle of a circle of gang members and they all beat on you for 60 seconds. The only place they can't hit you is in the face, but accidents happen.

It was crazy because I ran away from home to escape physical abuse and now it was happening with my so-called new family too. Once again I began to realize the awful reality of the gang there was no way out. I wanted to get out of the gang but was scared for my life. I had open heart surgery when I was 2 months old and a termination has no guidelines. They can beat you, slice your face, knock your teeth out, stab you, shoot you, and even kill you. I know it wasn't an empty threat because I have witnessed termination where many of those things happened.

I was too scared to get out; I was too scared to disobey their orders. Inevitably five of my so-called "sisters" and I were involved in a physical altercation that resulted in a murder.

I was out of one prison; the gang and into another: York C.I. all 6 of us were arrested for our involvement in the gang. All 6 of us turned on and wrote statements against each other.

Even though it was unintentional, the worst part of all of this is that an innocent woman died. A mother was stolen from a little boy. Many people suffered behind this horrific, senseless crime.

Where is the rest of our so-called "family" now when we need love and support? They forgot we are even alive. Not one visit, one phone call, not one letter, and no even one money order.

That's what a gang really is! Gang members that I've met since I've been incarcerated seem to think that their gang is different. When they rant and rave about how real their gang is I tell them "never seek love in a gang because you'll never find it. The only place you'll find yourself is on a two way street that only leads to prison or death. I beg them to learn from my mistakes.

Before we knew it, we had been digested

By a crime which we all detested

How could we become

the one thing we hate?

How can this be, could it be our fate?

The Dance Of Fate

I stood in the center of the dance floor all alone
He appeared out of no where and offered to take me
Home I stared him directly in his eyes
And somehow I could hear their unearthly
Cries it was not music or sounds of laughter
they were sounds of horror, people who
Didn't live happily ever

After

I heard the rage in his voice
Knowing he was evil I still made the
Choice

He extended his hand and asked me to
Dance

I looked at him immediately fell into
His trance

I knew what I was doing was wrong,
But how could I resist? The juke box was playing my
Favorite

Song. My feet took a mind of their own,
And he comforted me, so I didn't have to be alone

I knew he was someone I thought to fear

But he said all the right words I longed to hear
We danced and danced until our feet could stand no
more

I asked to sit because my feet was sore

He said yes like any gentlemen would

I began to confuse bad with good

He was far too charming and polite

Those nasty rumors couldn't possibly be right

I was the perfect victim for his trap

I fell right into his lap

I was trusting and willing to believe

He knew I would be easy to deceive

At the end of our time together, he practically dropped
me

Off at the prison gate,

When I realized who he was, it was too much too late
I had danced with the devil.

TRACIE BENARDI (CONT.)

A Hunger For Innocence

Thinking back to that horrid winter day,
Wondering why it had to be this way?
Thought we were big only our crime consumed us
It ate us up like a starved lion attacks its prey
It chewed us and spit us out all in child's play
We didn't realize it was vicious mouth in which we climbed
Before we knew it, we had been digested
By a crime which we all detested
How could we become the one thing we hate?
How can this be, could it be our fate?
Who would of though we'd made it through all the hard
times in our
Life,
To reach this a never ending story of more misery and
strife?
We thought we were big but could never be quite as large
No not with what we were charged
Said I "wouldn't lay down without a fight"
Well where am I every night.
Lying down in a prison cell
Why must we continue to be burned by the flames of hell
Ouch! It's scorching me, more than ever now
I wish I could turn back the page somehow

The End

It seems like even in the movies...
Every plot takes place in a hospital bed,
Where someone's dying
There isn't anymore laughter, only crying
No more sweet hellos; only sorrowful goodbyes
No more bright blue skies
No more happiness; just pain,
No more sunshine, the days are filled with rain
No more sweet gestures; just actions done in vain
What used to be enjoyable no longer exists
No more smiles; just a look of emptiness
This world must be on its way to the end
Man has no choice but to be his own best friend
You can't even count on your own blood brother
And when you look there is no other
The innocent are presumed guilty, the dangerous are still
on the loose
People are at each other's throats, instead of calling it a
truce.
This world is an evil one
No such thing as innocent fun
Life is one huge downfall after another
Struggling every day just to survive
Yet not knowing any purpose to even stay alive

DORTELL WILLIAMS With this short but meaningful piece, Dortell Williams joins our Beat Without writers for the first time. So many of the young men and women who write in our weekly workshops want to be famous that we find these words very timely. He reminds us all of how words — especially those words we write down — have a permanent power that can change both those reading them, and those writing them... This new writer comes to us from California State Prison, Lancaster.

What's In A Street Name?

I always wanted to make a name for myself. I wanted to be popular, even famous. I thought taggin' and earning a rep in the streets was the way to go. I thought it was cool to make a name for myself on the inside. I wanted to be notorious, like in the movies.

Only TV doesn't show the hurt your suffer or that you put on others.

I started writing inside my cell and accidentally made a name for myself. I didn't know writing was so important. Almost everything requires a writer. Books, commercials, movies, contracts, even the President's speeches.

And it's not square to be a writer. Ice Cube wrote "Barbershop," the Wayans brothers write most of their stuff, from "My Wife and Kids," to movies they star in like "White Chicks."

From the examples of Martin Luther King to Alicia Keyes, Jaime Foxx and George Lopez, I see that writing is not only a respectable way to make a name for yourself, but it also pays and keeps you out of trouble... and that can be nothing but a good thing.

CECIL WEST We're happy to present another lengthy selection of writing from BWO super-contributor Cecil West. By the time this is printed, Cecil is likely to be out of Florida State Prison and back living in the free world. He's pledged to stay in touch from the outs, and we hope to read the pieces from a free Cecil West soon. In the meantime, we still have a stack of pieces he wrote while at FSP in Raiford, Florida to publish. Of the selections below, his epic poem about Afro-American history and heroes is the gravitational center of these poems — it's clear that Cecil is someone who takes Black history seriously.

Listen To These Voices

Listen to these voices from the past speak to you through me...

As I hope the knowledge and wisdom will open your eyes to the point that you can see.

All the corruption we bring upon ourselves...

Hopefully you'll realize that we're all we have left.

We must unite and come together...

Than life would be a whole lot better.

There's power in unity as I will point out to you...

And you will know that my words are true.

Listen to these voices and you'll know that you're not alone...

'Cause all the great leaders' spirit lives on.

The more I study and learn about history...

I'm starting to realize that education is not a mystery.

It's a tool that we all must use...

Not to do so leaves room to be abused.

We must study to learn the ways of this world that we must live in...

It was meant to be this way from the very beginning.

For nearly 200 years southern farmers only grew cotton until George Washington Carver came along...

Now his name is carved in stone.

He created a method called crop rotation that became a success...

And even though he was a black man, he was considered the best.

He became famous around the world for his creative ideas...

Producing great crops in many fields.

In 1943, President Franklin D. Roosevelt had a statue made in honor of George Washington Carver...

It was another door opener for blacks, which was marvelous!

As I continue to write you will hear the voices from the past...

'Cause the impression our great leaders left will surely last.

The Harlem Renaissance was a time when black artists, writers and leaders stepped up...

Through the power of education and not luck!

By 1920's Harlem was bursting with artistic expression, political energy, and racial pride...

Through education things really got live.

The writers of the Harlem Renaissance fired the imaginations of black Americans...

And they moved through the music industry like an out of control hurricane.

The great trumpeter Louis Armstrong, and the jazz composer and pianist Duke Ellington opened many doors for out sisters and brothers...

And so did many others!

Marian Anderson, Paul Robeson had great voices when singing, they uplifted the soul...

Which was more valuable than money or gold.

In 1929 the United States entered a period of great depression and thousands of Americans lost their jobs and the Harlem Renaissance came to an abrupt end...

As many knew would happen from the very beginning!

But its impact left a last impression on American culture that exists to this day...

'Cause those great leaders paved the way.

As these voices of great leaders continue to speak through me to you...

Know that everything I'm saying is true.

Some people still fell that handling their differences with brute strength is the way...

That's not the case in these times and days.

Education gives you a power...

To handle your differences without violence.

August 21, 1831 Nat Turner and a group of slaves murdered 55 slave masters...

Which only led to self-destruction and disaster!

They was all caught and hanged within 36 hours...

And that's not what you will call true power!

Even though slave masters lived in fear...

Of revolt for many years!

The true power came from unity and education as the people came together as a whole...

And what they shared was more precious than gold!

Look at Isabella Baumfree who was born a slave...

But she became a very important chapter in the history pages.

In 1827 she escaped and became a free woman under the Anti-Slavery Act...

She soon became Sojourner Truth, a strong woman who spoke facts!

Sojourner Truth couldn't read or write...

But that didn't stop her from fighting.

She stood six feet tall and could sing, preach...

And using her life experience she even taught through her powerful speeches.

She drew large crowds wherever she spoke...

'Cause her powerful words carried a positive note.

She spoke of ending slavery and women's rights...

In Ohio 1851 she continued her fight!

Sojourner Truth's past made her a powerful speaker...

And even without a school education people looked up to her as a teacher.

This woman is part of our voices from the past...

The impression she's left will surely last!

You brothers and sisters think about the lifestyles you've lived...

No matter how bad you have something positive to give!

Knowledge, wisdom and experience...

What you've learned isn't an accident!

Martin Luther King, Jr. became a pastor in a church in Montgomery, Alabama...

And soon became a very powerful leader with his grammar.

In 1956, he organized the bus boycott that ended separate seating for blacks and whites...

But he didn't stop there, he continued his fight.

One of the highlights of the civil rights movement was the march on Washington, DC in 1963 when Dr. King led 250,000 people...

As I continue to write hoping my words touch you all deeply.

He led different races to Lincoln's Memorial demanding freedom for all...

As the voices of his dream continued to call!

For justice and equality for black Americans all over the world...

Knowing his speeches touched all the beautiful boys and girls.

He gave his eloquent "I Have a Dream" speech...

And it touched the President, who no one thought was possible to reach!

President John F. Kennedy passed the civil rights bill,

That important bill became law as the Civil Rights Act of 1964...

But that wasn't enough, Dr. King strove for more!

On April 3, 1968, Dr. King went to Memphis, Tennessee and gave a stirring speech that touched all...

As his dream continued to call!

That was the last speech that he'd ever make in his lifetime...

But he continued to live in many great leaders' minds.

The next day he was shot and killed at 39 years old...

But what he'd accomplished was worth more than any amount of gold!

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. continues to live even beyond the grave...

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Bringing equality and justice to all freed slaves!
In 1983, a national holiday was declared to honor Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. ...

Which they should have done sooner!
On his birthday all Americans recall his inspiring dream...
And we all know that his struggle shows what the love for mankind means!

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. will live forever through many great writers...

'Cause through their pen they will show that Mr. King was one of the great leaders and fighters.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. spoke against all the violence and hate...

Yet many still have hate in their hearts to this date!
And there's constant violence amongst the black race...
This is a problem that many blacks don't want to face!

We all know that the violence is because of all the drugs that have the ghettos infested to the point it has sisters and brothers blinded by greed...

And for people to speak out against the corruption on our street corners is what we need!

'Cause addiction is helping to spread that deadly disease AIDS...

And once you die you're only a chapter to another page!
The president and governor don't care about what happens in the ghettos...

'Cause their pockets are being filled with gold!
From the many prisons that stay full because of addiction...

As you know my words are not fiction!
There's more black men and women in prison than any race as we all know...

And it's destroying generation after generation at a rate that's not slow.

Brothers and sisters that's incarcerated are indulging in unprotected homosexuality each and every day...

Not caring that their helping to destroy the human race.

Once released from prison they get into the drug game and wild sex with female addicts...

And pass that deadly disease on and scream the female had it!

In most cases that is true...

'Cause there is not much those female addicts won't do.

CECIL WEST (CONT.)

For a hit of crack cocaine...

'Cause crack cocaine controls the brain.

So most addicts are not competent...

And something truly must be done!

My brothers and sisters, listen to the voice of all our great leaders from the past...

You must hear them 'cause they left an impression that will surely last.

Think about all the struggles and speeches to free us from bondage over 200 years ago...

Yet we're destroying each other on them street corners at a rate that's not slow!

Bush is the president and his wife is half-owner of the prison population canteen...

And we all know what that means!

More money for the Bush family, the rich getting richer and the poor getting poorer...

And people dying off at a rate that's far from slow!

All people must come together as a whole...

The Bush administration will continue to dig for gold!

Listen to all these voices my sisters and brother...

We're all we have and there's no others!

We must wake up before it's too late...

Stopping all the violence and hate!

We must unite and come together...

And you will see that things would get better!

We must start by cleaning up our street corners and helping others...

'Cause God created us all to be sisters and brothers!

As I sit here with visions of all the drug dealers, pimps, gangstas and players on our street corner...

I must continue to fight 'cause my ancestors won't leave me alone!

They are a part of me...

'Cause as I continue to learn, we share the same dreams.

Wake up my brothers and sisters before it's too late...

We now have a hand in controlling our own fates!

Listen to these voices...

And you'll know that we make our own choices!

Look Around

Look around and tell me what do you see...

I see four walls looking back at me.

A steel toilet that sits in the center of the floor...

My vision is blocked by a steel door.

With a small window to look out...

As a bunch of inmates continue scream and shout.

Talking shhh that has no meaning...

Living a life incarcerated with no special dreams.

Talking all day about killing one another...

As you can guess it's only my black brothers.

Corruption has grown to be a part of their lives...

Talking this and talking that with only a bunch of lies.

Look around you and what do you see...

A mirror to show you that you're the black sheep of the family tree.

Not caring that you only have three changes of clothes...

Yet you walk around trying to impress others with your words and a little gold.

You're talking like you're happy to be locked up...

While another man has your girl in the buck!

What do you expect when you're getting into trouble showing her that you don't care...

You continue being stupid not realizing you're all you have left.

Wake up my brother and make plans and set goals...

Than one day you'll have far more than clothes or gold.

Look around and take in all you see...

If you're a smart brother you'll listen to me.

As I sit here in this prison cell...

Thinking of the things that sent me to jail.

I realize this is not worth no nickles and dimes...

Sitting in a prison cell doing hard time.

I'll make my money in a different way...

'Cause my eyes has been opened and I see brighter days.

I've educated myself as much as I can...

'Cause I know education makes a better woman or man.
You'll find that you can make it in society without committing crime...

And know within your heart nothing is worth doing time!

I've written some powerful pieces for The Beat over the past years now...

And they've been a powerful encouragement somehow!

I enjoy sharing my wisdom with you young sisters and brothers...

And I don't discriminate, am including others

I'll continue to reach out to you through the pen...

And I will continue to live even when my life ends!

Look around my sisters and brothers that are in the pen or detention centers...

Make plans and set goals, you can become winners!

I'm not telling you nothing wrong...

In forty-four days I'll be going home.

I'll continue to reach out to you...

And you will remember this brother who stood proud and true!

CECIL WEST (CONT.)

I want to thank you for all the
times you've stood

beside me.

Even though I was considered
the black sheep
of the family tree.

Dear Mom

Dear Mom, when thinking of the times you held me when I
was a baby...

Wiping the tears from my young innocent face.

Telling me everything was gonna be alright...

As you read me bedside stories at night.

Fixing my breakfast every morning before school...

Telling me that education was a very important tool.

Dear Mom, as I think of all these things...

I want to shower you with gifts and expensive rings.

I know these words that I print will mean more to you...

'Cause they express a love that runs deep and true.

Something all the money in the world can't buy...

As you continue to read you'll know that I am not lying.

I know I haven't been the best kid...

It's not because of nothing you did.

You did your best to raise me right...

And I think of you every day and night.

All the things I've done to make you sad in the past...

It's amazing that your love continues to last.

Even when you suffered hard times...

You still had me, your son, on your mind.

I want to thank you for all the times you've stood beside
me.

Even though I was considered the black sheep of the
family tree.

I love you mother, more than life itself.

'Cause I know within my heart you're all I have left.

All Night Long

All night long...

As I think of you...

I stand real tall...

'Cause my love is true...

All night long...

As I see your face...

I toss and turn...

In this miserable place...

All night long...

As I see you in my dreams...

It shows me this...

Is what true love means...

All night long...

As I reach out to you...

When you're not there...

I'm so sad and blue...

I think of the time...

When you asked me to leave...

I stood there and cried...

As I begged you please...

As you told me the things...

That the doctor said...

If you had sex...

You'd end up dead...

He said you had a blockage...

That led to your heart...

I told you...

I loved you...

From the very start...

That my love...

Will mend your heart...

Please don't go...

Let's leave it up to God...

'Cause once you leave...

You'll break my heart...

As I walked away...

My heart torn apart...

I cried out in anguish...

To the almighty God...

All night long...

These memories flash through my
mind...

I know I'll love you...

'Til the end of time...

I find myself crying...

In my sleep...

Caused by emotions...

That run so very deep...

They say time...

Will mend a broken heart...

Five years later...

I still cry out to God...

I ask myself...

When will this pain come to an end...

I know it will be...

With me 'til the day I die...

When thinking of my wife...

I break down and cry...

All night long...

As I think of you...

I stand real tall...

'Cause my love is true...

All night long...

As I see your face...

I toss and turn...

In this miserable place...

All night long...

As I see you in my dreams...

It shows me this...

Is what true love means...

All night long...

As I reach out to you...

When you're not here...

I'm so sad and blue...

As I sit here...

Writing this song...

Deep within my heart...

I'm feeling so very alone...

Thinking of all the times...

We've kissed and touched...

These memories...

Mean so very much...

I have visions...

Of all the times we've made love...

Which was always as beautiful...

As the stars shining up above...

All the times we've held hands...

Looking out over the ocean...

Experiencing a love...

That stirred deep emotions...

All night long...

I shiver and shake...

'Cause my heart...

Has grown cold...

Without you my beautiful wife...

It's as if I have no soul...

It's as if I'm dying slowly...

Since you've been gone...

As I pray to God...

That you'll come back home...

Sandra my baby...

Please come home...

Please Sandra...

I am feeling so very alone...

I'll continue to wait...

Until the end of time...

In my heart...

You'll always be mine...

All night long...

As I continue to wait...

I can't accept the fact...

A life of pain is my fate...

I'll continue to struggle...

And fight to keep my dreams alive...

As I wait patiently...

For my beautiful wife...

All night long.

How Can I

How can I ever forget you and all the beautiful times we've shared...

I sit here thinking of you knowing you still care.
As my thoughts drift through time and space...
In my mind I continue seeing your beautiful face.
I know it's because of emotions running so very deep...
I see your beautiful smile in my dreams as I sleep.

How can I ever forget the first time we met as we smiled at each other through the glass...

In my mind and heart these memories will surely last.
I knew it was love at first sight...
As I sit here I think of you day and night.
Even though we're separated and far apart...
I want you to know that you'll always hold a very special place in my heart.

How can I ever forget the sorrow, hurt and pain that was in your eyes when you asked me to leave...

I know the same sorrow, hurt and pain was reflected in my own eyes as I begged you please.
As the tears trickled down both our cheeks from the unbearable pain...
At that time I was a very miserable man.
Five years has passed us by...
And sometimes when thinking of you I break down and cry!

How can I feel such pain from the love that's deep within my heart...

I continue to seek answers as I pray to the almighty God!
Holding on to the hope that we'll be together again...

'Cause without you my beautiful wife I am only half a man.
I know I've brought you a lot of hurt and pain in the past...
But the love that's in my heart for you will surely last!

How can I ever have a happy life...
When I'm still deeply in love with my beautiful wife.
I ask myself this over and over again...
Knowing without you I am only half a man
Will this pain ever leave my heart...
Even with the help of the almighty God.
Did He mean for it to be this way...
I ask myself this night and day!

I have visions of all the beautiful times that we've shared...
Knowing within my heart you have to still care.

All the times we've made sweet passionate love...
Which was as beautiful as the stars shining bright up above.

All the times we've walked along the ocean shore holding hands...

At them times I was a very happy man!

I love you Sandra Gail West, more than anything in this world...

And deep within my heart I know I could never fall in love with another girl.

How can I forget the way we treasured looking out over the ocean and the moon and the beautiful stars in the sky...
How can I? How?

ANDREW We're happy to bring this next writer to the table because he's offering ideas that go against the norm. A lot of times we see people who are incarcerated turn to religion because its their only means of hope. And some times because they genuinely feel like they need to turn their lives over to God. But for others, God and religion are concepts they find harder to believe. Questions that start with, "Why?" often come up like, "If there is a God, then why is there so much disease in the world?" And we're sure your most faithful people could answer that in the blink of an eye. But everyone's entitled to their own opinions and we respect him for sharing his even though it goes against the grain. He closes with a piece about where he is Dewitt Nelson (a Youth Authority institution) in Stockton, CA. Thank you for the courage you displayed in expressing your beliefs.

My CYA Experience

My CYA experience: It's funny, because CYA is different for each individual. Me, it was okay—there's ups and downs, like everywhere. I was recently told an analogy that made me laugh later, when I was thinking about it, because it fits CYA perfectly. It goes like this: CYA is like a whore house. The nicer you are and the more you talk, the easier and more often you get done. That's what CYA is like. If you're headed to CYA, my advice is "Don't accept favors from anybody, not even your most trusted associate."

I hate to give somebody advice that sounds so hopeless, but if you don't do this, you'll have some long and hard time to do. If you do accept this advice and use it to your advantage, you'll at first get in minor trouble, then you'll be able to do your time without hassle.

Anyway, that's the get down on how to get by. I spent about eight months there and was in three different CYA institutions. Then, during my stay there, my county did an investigation because of the reports of abuse inside of the institution Chad. The videotape was on the news. Then a judge pulled me from there and sent me here (ROP.) I was glad, because most people don't get a second chance like me.

Anyway, I'll probably be here for the next year, then I'll go home and get myself into school.

Where's God?

It's interesting when you think about it, is there a God? We see people all over the place going to church, praying, wearing a crucifix and telling people they're Christians, Jewish, Muslim, Buddhist and other religions. I often find humor in these people, because my "belief" is either these people are scared that when they die, that's the end of it, or they were just brought up in that particular religion. A lot of people see me as just another atheist, but that just isn't the truth. As a matter of fact, I was once a devoted Christian until "I saw the light."

Anyway, there are many reasons I believe this, but I'll just share a couple.

This is the main reason I'm asking myself every day, "Where's God?" If there is a God, why are baby boys and baby girls getting murdered, raped, molested and abused? Why are families getting torn apart my drugs and crime? Why are there people starving to death? Why is there war, where innocent people get killed? Shhh, this piece is to all those believers out there, and if you do give an answer, don't give a stupid ass reply, like, "Because we all have a purpose." Forget that. I mean, just ask yourself, would you allow your son or daughter to get raped, killed or molested? In the Bible it does say we are God's children and He loves us. Hello! Open your eyes!

Another thing I want to say, is, why believe? Because you're afraid? Or because you don't understand the things around yourself? My second reason is "God is fear." Well, it's a pretty simple reason. Notice that a long time ago, even before Jesus, that God was worshipped way more and taken way more seriously. Why? Because we didn't know as much as we know today. Our technology and science wasn't as developed as it is today.

For instance, in the pagan religion, pagans believed that tsunami waves and rough seas were the result of Poseidon's anger. Then, as we learned the true cause of the earth's phenomenon, the pagan religion diminished.

Anyway, that's just one example. There are many more if you read up on this topic. Those are just two of my reasons for not having faith in God. But I'm not trying to say don't do what you do, because a lot of religions teach people how to be better people and I mean, if there was never religion, nobody would have morale. What I'm saying is, the Bible gave us unwritten guidelines to life. So, basically, "It sounds nice." But it ain't gonna kill you if you don't believe. Open up to new things and don't be afraid.

JUAN C. SANDOVAL

We warmly welcome this veteran of CYA life to our pages of The Beat making big changes. He recognizes the problems and now he must take on the task of working on staying clean and sober in his community upon touching down. We do hope to hear from Juan C. Sandoval in the neat future. His poems speak from the heart. He writes about his experiences from the YTS (Youth Training School)/CYA in Chino, CA

The Word, "Victim"

The word, "Victim;" what does it mean?
When you dad is a drunk and your mom is a fiend?
Maybe working for Sam, not making a dime
Or when your uncle touches you, before you turn nine
The fact of your sex and age; are you following me?
Can a prostitute be a victim of rape?
Enslaved into drugs; was that really her fate?
Getting jumped, stabbed or kill, for being your race
Done up by your own; 'cause to them, you're disgraced
"Wipe all them tears from outta your face!"
"For making a victim, you live in this place"
Some call it prison, some call it jail
"Wake up homie! You're living hell!"
Can a victim be, an unborn child?
Dumped in a trash, pile after pile
Receiving birth into earth, with mama all high
CPS is there to get you, before she says, "bye"
Getting stuffed in a closet, for crying of hunger
Mom doesn't know better; but to comfort her anger
Are we victims to a corrupted government?
By taking our lands; without our consent?
By raping our women and enforcing their names?
Enforcing religion, language and turning us slaves?
With a gover-nator that influenced violence
Now handing three strikes, and considering us high risk
A president that supplied arms to Osama's
Then act all surprised when they're moving up on us
Costing more lives, to make it all good
The damage is done, let that be understood
There's more crimes in the system
Then there is in the hood
By not knowing laws
You get misunderstood
After all that we've done
And all that we've seen
The word, "victim"
What does it mean?

(a little some-some for Victims Awareness week/month.
Dedicated to everyone!)

"Wipe all them tears from
outta your face!"

"For making a victim,
you live in this place"

Some call it prison, some call it jail

"Wake up homie! You're living hell!"

Dear Beat

What's up Beat? My name is Juan Carlos Sandoval. My Birthday is April 18. I'm 23 years old and still in the Y. I came here when I was 15. They let me go five times and the longest I've been out for is five months; shortest one (month). I got sentenced to YA for ADW. (May 1997 originally attempted murder). I was sentenced from Sonoma County. I'm from Santa Rosa. (Originally from Richmond) the judge game me eight years by offence and 10 by age. ('Till I'm 25).

Anyhow, to make a long, long story short; let me tell you my reasons for writing: I read one of your guys "Poetry books" and I loved it. I like how you guys keep a lot of youngsters motivated. My younger brother of 15 also writes poems and was in the halls. Too bad your poetry hasn't hit my county yet, or else I'm pretty sure he would have wrote some too.

I have a lot of poems of my own and I'm willing to share them with you and the younger crowd. After I read your bomb ass literature, I was inspired to write some aimed for those in the halls, and to those that glorify jail, as well as those that are on their way. I can get more into how cold this system is, but I'm gonna keep it simple and as real as possible.

Read these poems. I hope you enjoy them and don't bore you with my long ass poem.

Drugs

You gotta think quick and come up with a strategy
I'm going crazy with no money and all this insanity
Done so much wrong in the name of
methamphetamines
Shoot it, smoke it, or snort it; you will never be at
peace
You can fiend so much, that it can drop you to your
knees
Not to pray or play; but I really just can't say
I stole two thousand from my mama
After I stopped smoking marijuana
I had other things in mind
That was speeding up my time
I was freakin', robbin' and tweekin'
Fools are out to get me, I ain't eating or sleepn'
I went from Fridays
To four to five days
Thought a possum was staring through my window
Just bags under my eyes; I was looking at a mirror
Getting all screwed up, sucked up
Punk was staring too long; he wound up getting stuck
I told you, "Don't mess with the chuck!"
My mom thinks that I'm sick,
If she only knew all the drugs that I did
"Insane in the membrane" just like Cypress Hill
Trying to look cool, y haora estoy torrido
(now I'm locked up)
All the staff knows is my pinche apellido (damn last
name)
From 1997 to 2007, is what the judge ordered
Should I say, recommended?
Five violations with no hesitations
Sheriffs slap on cuffs, with no interrogations
After eight years of being in this shhh
I look back; damn I wish I was a kid
25 to life; who haves the highest bid?
So think twice, and don't do what I did
Over all this pride and drugs
I missed out on my kid

(A little on how drugs affected my life. Drugs are dirty.
Specially meth. And that's what you become. They say
you are what you eat. In this case, you are what you
smoke, shoot or snort).

Why am I in The Y?

When I was 15, I came to the "Y"
 I'm 23 now, and I ask myself, "why?"
 Was it my destiny?
 Why did it happen to me?
 If the hospital was 45 more seconds away,
 My victim wouldn't have been here today
 Why did he have to be so racial?
 Why did I act in reprobation?
 Six of them clowning being disrespectful
 Three of us furious, all filled with anger
 I picked me the loudest, went for his heart
 I should of thought twice, right there from the start
 Six inches got to rip through his lung
 Now I'm in the hall
 Feeling like a hog
 Banging, fighting, acting a fool
 At night starving, missing mom's food
 I'm so hard, that I don't even cry
 Heart is too cold, from all these feelings inside
 Sonoma County judge gives me a chance
 "90 day OP. So we can see if you change"
 "You back in 60, what did you do?"
 "I got in five fights."
 "Ain't that what you do?"
 "You messed up my child, so now you're through"
 "What was I suppose to do?"
 "Let them diss me and act like it's cool?"
 "I'm giving you eight by offense and ten to expire"
 Now I'm in NR (CYA), asking for the wire
 I'm only 15, how can I be tired?
 31/2 years pass, now I'm out on parole
 Two months later I'm back, for shoplifting with a hoe
 "I promise I'll be good, so please let me go"
 "You think I'm a fool boy? The answer is, hell no!"
 Another year pass, I'm out on parole
 This time I'm sure I won't mess with a hoe
 I found another hina
 Too bad that she's a winner
 She's pretty and cool; and I just want some sex
 She's never at home. All I gotta do is find her
 Drinking, smoking
 Toking and choking
 "Ain't you on parole fool? You can't be smoking!"
 "I ain't getting tested... I'm hoping"
 Four months later, in Sacramento County
 Two minutes later. "I'm getting jumped homie!"
 I'm still banging, still being cool
 "You can't find nothing better to do?"
 A year later they release me again
 Out for a month; back in again
 "Mama send me more pictures and money"
 "You back in again? You little dummy"
 "You bring this on yourself"
 "You don't deserve my help!"
 "I love you mijo. I'll always be there for you"
 "Is there anything else; I can do for you?"
 "Thank you mom. I love you too"
 "You gotta show me. Not do what you do"
 "I will; I promise to you"
 "Shut up. You can't ever be true"
 Nine months and I'm out!
 "I'll be good this time, no doubt"
 "I'm 21. Now I'm legal"
 "For me drinking ain't illegal"
 "I've been out for five"
 "My PO won't mind"
 Driving back from work
 Pipe in my pocket. "What a dork"
 Driving with one headlight in the dark
 Police passed me by, so fast like a dart
 Look in my rearview, he gets behind me
 Hearts pumping hard, from all this rock that's in me
 "three more houses away and I'm there
 If only I can shake this square"
 Damn, that's red and blue lights"

Made me forget all about the pipes
 "Can I see your license and registration?"
 "Sure," I say, with no hesitation
 What comes flying out of my pocket?
 You got it...
 Back in the drug program; one more again
 "I swear this time sir, it won't happen again"
 Eleven months later, I'm out on parole
 This time in Bakers away from my home (Santa Rosa)
 Three months later, nine certifications, I'm doing fine
 Get introduced to this lady, that looks hella fine
 Got in some trouble, now we're on the run
 She's on parole too, so we're just having fun
 Two months later, we get in a fight
 She goes to jail, I'm already in flight
 Two weeks later, I get caught up
 Coming out of Motel 6, so now I'm stuck
 Had two warrants for what I did
 All along, she's having my kid
 Now I'm stressing
 Waiting for a blessing
 But now it's too late
 Look what crime and drugs create!
 My baby was born
 I'm back in the "Y"
 My head is thumping
 I ask myself, "Why?"

(This one is long and simple. Just to give you a general idea of how and why I came to YA and why I keep coming back.)

In Lock Up For Several Months

I'm a guest to this lonely cold cell
 I realize I'm in a jail of a jail
 If it wasn't the weather
 I would think I'm in hell
 From an open dorm,
 To being alone
 A danger to myself and to others
 Caught with these shanks; not a game for lovers
 Fifteen days later, sent back to my dorm
 Gone for so long, that it feels like home
 Where's all my canteen that I bought with my own?
 All my letters and pictures that I value like home?
 Some fool stole it, so I try to bust his dome
 Back to lock up, no injuries on me
 He's in the clinic for taking from me
 Six more months time added on me
 four months ago, caught for a dirty
 Getting high in jail; no more TV
 Had one problem, now it's turned into three
 For being selfish; just thinking of me
 My first son was born, I'm still in this cell
 My girls been crying, feeling sad, can't you tell?
 When will I change? When will I learn?
 When I'm in a box, with a hole in my dome?
 "Regret my wrongs creator; let me go home"
 "I'll be good, I'll leave this mess all alone"
 I'm tired of hearing,
 "Wake up, shower and hour!" (Hour program)
 Rather be free, like that tiny bird on that flower
 Just plotting on ways to kill time
 Need to plot on ways to stay in line
 It's nobody's fault
 The fault is all mine!

(I wrote this poem from lock up before I got transferred from DWN. All this took place on my last violation; this one. I was suppose to go home in 4 to 5 months from 9/04. Now I'm looking at 01/06. It seems like instead of making progress I'm getting worsen, huh? That's not the case. I made some bad choices. But now I'm a father and regret all of them. I can just be good now and look forward to being the best father!

It seems like even in the movies...
Every plot takes place in a hospital bed,
Where someone's dying
There isn't anymore laughter, only crying
No more sweet hellos; only sorrowful goodbyes
No more bright blue skies
No more happiness; just pain,
No more sunshine, the days are filled with rain
No more sweet gestures; just actions done in vain
What used to be enjoyable no longer exists
No more smiles; just a look of emptiness

check out the rest of Tracie Benardi's BWD piece on page 49

